The Portrait Bust and French Cultural Politics in the Eighteenth Century

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The Portrait Bust and French Cultural Politics in the Eighteenth Century

By

Ronit Milano

In memory of Renée

who taught me about the performative nature of smiles

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Introduction

No laughter in marble.
—DENIS DIDEROT[1]

The term 'portrait bust' rarely awakens much enthusiasm among contemporary art connoisseurs, most of whom will likely circumvent major museum galleries devoted to this genre of sculpture. Indeed, many art lovers would probably be surprised to learn that during certain historical periods, portrait busts were extremely popular, and were sought after by governments, royal courts, private patrons, and middle-class consumers. Sculptors who specialized in their creation earned a respectable living, while the most successful portraitists were celebrated as 'geniuses.' One of these periods—the four decades preceding the French Revolution—is the subject of this book, which probes the rich and complex aesthetic and intellectual charge of portrait busts in eighteenth-century France and their role as powerful agents of epistemological change.

"The statue," as Jacques de Caso observed in his seminal study of David d'Angers, "is a simulacrum, a sign, destined at the same time for public communication and private manipulation."[2] Drawing on this observation, my study explores eighteenth-century French portrait busts as a constitutive form of art charged with articulating and propagating legible social, cultural, and political messages. The busts examined in this book were created between 1750 and 1789, a time of seismic ideological shifts that reshaped French individual and collective identities in accordance with central concepts of Enlightenment thought. The main argument made throughout this study is that these identities were given a particular form of expression in sculpted busts, thus presenting us with a portrait of the French middle and upper classes during a period of momentous change. The lower classes, whose members could not afford this medium, are not depicted in this corpus of works, and their representation thus remains outside the scope of this book.

The fact that the reformulation of French identity was related both to the rise of individualism and to the emergence of a new public consciousness gives rise to the following questions: How did artistic formulae or conventions

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1 Denis Diderot, *Salon of 1765* in his *Oeuvres completes, Tome XIV: Salon de 1765; Essais sur la peinture: beaux-arts I*, eds. Else Marie Bukdahl, Annette Lorenceau and Gita May (Paris, 1984), 287.

2 Jacques de Caso, *David d'Angers: Sculptural Communication in the Age of Romanticism* (Princeton, N.J., 1992), 25.

intersect with Enlightenment ideologies, and to what extent was this intersection epitomized in the portrait bust? What is the nature of the unique interrelation between sculpture and Enlightenment thought? In what ways did the sculptural portrait contribute to the articulation of new ideas concerning both private and public cultural identities? How were private commissions transformed into public or collective statements? And, finally, how did the portrait bust operate in the political sphere?

My interest in the portrait bust was initially motivated by the remarkable ability of such a concise and limited art form to formulate and communicate complex cultural ideas and messages. The portrait bust usually includes few or no accessories, and contains no accompanying figures or sculptural background; and since it most often only represents the head, shoulders, and upper part of the sitter's chest, it can hardly convey ideas through bodily gestures. This genre of portraiture, moreover, is free-standing and portable, and often lent itself to the production of multiple copies destined for various public and private sites. Busts were thus charged with an inherent message and iconography that existed independently of their location and surroundings, while also gaining part of their significance from the particular and sometimes changing context in which they were placed. Given these conditions of reception, and the absence of documented information concerning the display context of some of the busts, I analyze the immanent messages embodied in them independently of the sites in which they were displayed, and examine groups of busts that share related motifs or themes. This methodology has served both to reveal the existence of prevailing artistic formulae, and to draw attention to the powerful role of this genre in articulating, disseminating, and implementing cultural ideas.

My interest in this subject was furthered by my observation of the remarkable differences between painted and sculpted portraits in pre-revolutionary France in terms of both their style and function. Whereas painted portraits, while usually eschewing allegorical depictions of the sitters, embody the lightness and mischievous spirit of the Rococo, the sculptural busts appear relatively solemn, and often employ classicizing motifs such as nudity or ancient drapery, which tie the sitter to an ideal sphere. Yet whereas traditional readings of these busts centered on such classicizing motifs, this study suggests a new and alternative interpretation of their sculptural iconography—pointing to the complexity of their cultural associations and to their hybrid character, which simultaneously communicates classicizing and modern ideals.

The second half of the eighteenth century was marked by a surge of sculpted portraits featuring contemporary individuals, which coincided with a growing cultural interest in contemporaneity and in the importance of the moment.

The shift from the use of such busts to pay homage to national political celebrities or ancient philosophers to their use for the portrayal of contemporary French intellectuals and cultural figures constituted a remarkable transformation in the nature of this genre. At the same time, changing perceptions of the individual's position within the family and a new emphasis on the present rather than on the portrayal of lineage altered the representation of ordinary men, women, and children. These developments resulted in a gradual blurring of the distinction between traditional representations of virtue, genius, and power and new artistic formulae that were applied to different types of sitters. Such formulae allowed for the creation of distinct, individualized portraits, while simultaneously forging a collective depiction of modern 'Frenchhood.' An examination of the intersections between images of royalty and of ordinary men, or between those of philosophers and artists, for instance, points to the articulation of important cultural messages concerning the relative flexibility of societal definitions, as well as to the increasingly egalitarian perception of French virtue.

As will become clear in the following chapters, the genre of the portrait bust was one of the sites in which the particular charge of this last term, and its interrelated meanings in eighteenth-century French culture, were articulated. For while the basic meaning of 'virtue' was equated with moral excellence, changing definitions of morality itself, and its contingency upon new perceptions of religion, politics, gender, and additional social and intellectual categories, led to its redefinition in a range of different arenas.[3] The sculptural works analyzed throughout the book thus participate in elucidating the formulation of virtue within a larger redefinition of public and private spheres—including filial, maternal, and paternal virtue in the context of the family, the political or military virtue of prominent figures, the moral virtue of philosophers, and—building upon these different types of virtue—the collective virtue of the nation as a whole. For as becomes evident in my analysis of various types of busts, underlying the specific manifestations of virtue was its inextricable connection to the social order. In other words, while French virtue could be sought or exemplified by individuals in different frameworks, it was defined in terms of the individual's place within a larger social construct, and could thus also describe the collective essence of an entire social group.

Although it is difficult to approximate the number of busts circulating in Paris during this time, primary sources concerning celebrated sitters and successful artists' studios make it possible to estimate that the period in question

3 For further discussion, see Marisa Linton, *The Politics of Virtue in Enlightenment France* (Houndmills, Basingstoke and Hampshire, 2001).

gave rise to the creation of hundreds of original portraits sculpted in various materials. These celebrated works were usually emulated and reproduced, resulting in the production of thousands of portrait busts in different sizes and materials. Many of these portraits and copies were lost or destroyed for various reasons: the French Revolution led to the mass destruction of much of the French aristocracy's property, while additional artworks, especially small ones, were lost following the flight of their owners. In addition, the passage of time damaged works made of more fragile materials such as plaster or terracotta, resulting in the loss of an estimated several thousand works. Nevertheless, hundreds of French portrait busts executed during this period have survived, and are today preserved in museums and private collections. Many of these works have yet to be studied or written about, and have received no mention in scholarly publications. This book, however, does not attempt to provide the reader with a catalogue raisonné of eighteenth-century busts. Rather, it aims to examine some of the most significant stylistic and iconographic motifs characteristic of this genre, while exploring their contribution to both reflecting and shaping the cultural narratives of pre-revolutionary France.

The body of works presented in the following chapters is interpreted in light of five major cultural, social, and political themes that figured prominently in the intellectual discourse of the period. These include Enlightenment philosophy, gender and the construction of femininity, transformations in the perception of childhood, constructions of masculinity, and changing representations of French royal figures, which were related to major political changes. Given this study's objective to recognize and define prevailing patterns of representation, the portraits chosen for analysis all represent dominant artistic formulae. My concentration on busts created and exhibited in Paris or Versailles (with the exception of several additional busts included for comparative purposes) aims to present a cohesive body of works whose aesthetics were familiar to the members of the country's leading intellectual, artistic, political, and social milieus. Since these milieus were centered in Paris and Versailles, these cities are viewed by most historians of eighteenth-century France as the site of major cultural and intellectual transformations. Many of the sitters represented in portrait busts were prominent members of the French aristocracy and of the Parisian haute bourgeoisie. As such, they represent both the commissioners and the consumers of a range of cultural and artistic initiatives, and played a significant role in the economy of the portrait bust.[4] The ideas articulated and propagated in these busts, which were displayed in the Paris Salon and

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4   As Colin B. Bailey has suggested, in many cases the involvement of the commissioner was not related solely to economic concerns, but also included a dialogue with the artist about

in various public and private spaces, were subsequently disseminated among members of the lower middle classes by means of cheaper reproductions.

As this introductory discussion makes clear, my point of departure is the status of the portrait bust as a distinct and autonomous artistic genre, whose popularity and conditions of reception endowed it with a powerful role as an agent of cultural change. Paradoxically, sculptural portraiture in general has been largely neglected by modern scholarship, perhaps due to its reputation as a genre related to emulation and replication, or simply because of its seemingly limited range of representational possibilities—epitomized in Baudelaire's famous claim that "sculpture is tiresome."[5] Despite a growing number of studies devoted to this genre, the portrait bust remains marginalized within scholarly discourse. However, as Malcolm Baker notes, "the virtual invisibility of the portrait bust within recent art historical writing on the early modern period stands in stark contrast to its prominence within eighteenth-century culture."[6] As scholars in recent decades have paid increasing attention to sculpture, its interpretation and analysis came to require new and distinct scholarly methodologies.[7] These methodological developments inform my own scholarly investigation of the portrait bust, and have led to its contextualization within the arena of sculptural discourse rather than within that of painted portraiture.[8] Indeed, while eighteenth-century painted portraits were similarly concerned with the reformulation of personal identity, the rise of individualism, and the development of new representational formulae, sculpture was seen as possessing a number of unique traits that endowed it with a special status and particular functions. The genre of the portrait bust was viewed as entertaining

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aesthetic concerns. See Bailey's *Patriotic Taste: Collecting Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Paris* (New Haven and London, 2002).

5   Charles Baudelaire, "Pourquoi la sculpture est ennuyeuse," in his *Salon de 1846* (Paris, 1846), part XVI. Web: http://baudelaire.litteratura.com/?rub=oeuvre&srub=cri&id=457, accessed June 9, 2014.

6   Malcolm Baker, "Making the Portrait Bust Modern: Tradition and Innovation in Eighteenth-Century British Sculptural Portraiture," in *Kopf—Bild: die Büste in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, eds. Jeanette Kohl and Rebecca Müller (München, 2007), 347.

7   Among other sources, see: Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, 1983), 31–42; Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven and London, 2000).

8   Two significant and recent additions to the scholarship of the period's portraits within a pictorial framework are: Marcia Pointon, *Portrayal and the Search for Identity* (London, 2013)—focusing mainly on the British field; Amy Freund, *Portraiture and Politics in Revolutionary France* (University Park, PA, 2014).

a stylistic and thematic connection to the revered art and ideals of antiquity. At the same time, the medium's generic and ideal qualities made it into a privileged vehicle for the visual formulation of a new collective identity, so that its messages were seen as related in important ways to the social body. Sculpture was also perceived as strongly tied to the communication of philosophical ideals and political messages. Busts in the pre-revolutionary climate were thus perceived not only as portraits, but also as cultural signs whose interpretation involved an imaginary dialogue between the sitter, the artist, and the viewer, as well as between past, present and future.

In addition to the examination of cultural resonances and conditions of reception and display, the study of eighteenth-century French sculpture requires a consideration of some unique economic aspects related to the commissioning, creation, dissemination, sale, reproduction, and exhibition of sculptural works. The status of the bust as a reproducible object was of special significance in terms of its perception during this time: for while the discourse on whether sculpture should be defined as art or artefact has a long history, the unprecedentedly widespread extent to which sculptures were reproduced in the eighteenth century endowed this discourse with special import. Moreover, the widespread reproduction of portrait busts and their prevalence in private homes enhanced their function as a cultural platform for the distribution and implementation of cultural ideas and ideologies. The French theoretical and institutional framework for the display and discussion of art, which centered on the annual exhibitions at the Paris Salon, created a unique context of meaning for French sculpture: the practices of viewing and commenting on art, and of reading and writing art critiques, made French artists highly aware of how their works were received. At the same time, viewers paid special attention to matters of technique and to the use of various materials—thus creating an interconnection between the production and reception of sculpture.[9]

Although the current study is limited to pre-revolutionary works, and does not directly relate to the political transformations surrounding the French Revolution, the particular political climate in which these works were created cannot be overlooked. For while an analysis of public monuments is naturally more suitable for an exploration of the interrelations between sculpture and political ideologies, the use of the portrait bust as a propaganda device inevi-

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9   This argument is further elaborated—although relating to British sculpture—in: Malcolm
    Baker, *Figured in Marble: The Making and Viewing of Eighteenth-Century Sculpture* (London
    & Los Angeles, 2000), 9–20.

tably calls attention to the political conditions surrounding its creation.[10] By contributing to the formation of a modern individual identity and of a new collective image of French society, and by shaping and distributing various Enlightenment ideals, the portrait bust inevitably played a part in the series of cultural, political, and social processes that eventually led to the Revolution.

Having briefly laid out some of the many ideas and discourses surrounding the eighteenth-century portrait bust, its ability to act as a signifier for such a complex set of concerns in such a concise, limited form can be more fully appreciated as truly astounding. Such an appreciation, however, requires some further discussion of the nature of these busts. In addition to representing the sitter's head, shoulders, and the upper part of the chest, in rare cases the design of the bust included the sitter's hands. Simple accessories and attributes such as a detail of drapery, a hat, jewels, flowers, badges or ribbons might also be included in the composition.

It is also important to distinguish the genre of portrait busts explored in this study from other types of busts such as idealized heads, allegorical busts, and commemorative busts, which are beyond the scope of this book. The commemorative portrait bust was extremely popular in the preceding centuries, and was most commonly displayed in private church chapels. The demise of this genre and the rise of eighteenth-century portraits that represent living individuals is related, on the one hand, to the cultural emphasis on the constitution of the self and to the growing preoccupation with contemporaneity, and on the other hand, to Enlightenment secularization, to the fostering of a new ideal of domesticity, and to the shift from the display of busts in private chapels to their positioning in private homes. Although busts were already displayed in private spaces during the Renaissance and the Baroque eras, such displays centered on prominent and mostly deceased family members as a documentation of family lineage. By contrast, eighteenth-century portraits embraced the individuality of sitters acknowledged for their personal achievements and virtue rather than for their genealogical importance. As this study will demonstrate, the flourishing of the portrait bust was therefore rooted in the most significant epistemological shift of the Enlightenment period: the rise of the individual. Together with the ascendance of the bourgeoisie, which wished to

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10   For an analysis of French public monuments at the dawn of the Revolution, see Erika Naginski, *Sculpture and Enlightenment* (Los Angeles, 2009); Jacques de Caso discusses a slightly later period in this respect in *David d'Angers*; on British parallels, see David Bindman and Malcolm Baker, *Roubiliac and the Eighteenth-Century Monument: Sculpture as Theatre* (New Haven and London, 1995); Joan Michèle Coutu, *Persuasion and Propaganda: Monuments and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire* (Montréal, 2006).

see itself as a participant in the period's artistic and cultural discourses, this shift led to an abundance of both painted and sculpted portraits representing living individuals.[11]

From a rhetorical perspective, the eighteenth-century portrait bust played a double role: to begin with, it was commissioned in order to generate a statement concerning the sitter or to contribute to the formulation of his or her public image. Yet in addition to this traditional function, the commissioning of original busts representing cultural celebrities, or the acquisition of cheaper reproductions of such busts, enabled the sitter's appearance—at once personal and ideal—to be transformed into a generic representation. Together with clothing and accessories, physiognomic traits—which during this period became a major parameter in the evaluation of the individual[12]—could thus be symbolically appropriated by the bust's owner. At the same time, such busts could also function as a symbolic embodiment of entire social groups or of French society as a whole—that is, of a collective composed of numerous individuals characterized by these same traits.[13] For instance, copies of the portrait of the laughing Madame Houdon (Chapter 2, fig. 15), the wife of the sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon, could have been purchased by women who were not necessarily acquainted with the sitter, yet who wished to identify with Madame Houdon's natural, maternal, delighted and vivacious air, which represented the contemporary ideal of femininity. The rise of the individual thus played a central role in the economy and operation of the eighteenth-century portrait bust precisely because of its dual nature as representing both a particular subject and an ideal person.

11   Martin Schieder, "'Les Portraits sont devenus un spectacle nécessaire à chaque Français'. Le discours esthétique sur le portrait au milieu du XVIIIe siècle," in *Penser l'art dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle: théorie, critique, philosophie, histoire*, eds. Christian Michel and Carl Magnusson (Paris, 2013), 41–58.

12   Melissa Percival discusses the role of physiognomy in painted portraits of the eighteenth-century, tying the artistic practices to the participation of the beholder in the construction of the self: Percival, *The Appearance of Character: Physiognomy and Facial Expression in Eighteenth-Century France* (Leeds, 2000); Central to this discussion is the influential work by Johann Caspar Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* (published in German in 1775–78, in French in 1781–1803 and in English 1788–99); for a modern perspective on Lavater's influence, see Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler, eds., *Physiognomy in Profile: Lavater's Impact on European Culture* (Newark, 2005).

13   Willibald Sauerländer's interpretation of Houdon's portraits is of significant importance in this respect: Sauerländer, *Essai sur les visages des bustes de Houdon* (Paris, 2005).

The recently revived interest in sculptural portraiture has benefitted significantly from the scholarship of Malcolm Baker, who has focused mostly on British sculpture while making a notable contribution to this field as a whole.[14] Guilhem Scherf, the chief curator of eighteenth-century sculpture at the Musée du Louvre, contributed immensely to the study of French sculpture, and particularly of sculptural portraiture.[15] Indeed, his recent exhibition catalogues and monographs on French sculptors, which have brought to light material on artists such as Clodion, Jean-Antoine Houdon, Augustin Pajou, or Jean-Baptiste Pigalle, attest to a museological commitment to continue the scholarship of H. H. Arnason, Jean-René Gaborit, Louis Réau, François Souchal, and Gerold Weber.[16] Building on Baker and Scherf's work, the current study wishes to add a new perspective to the analysis of this genre, defining it as a cultural agent central to the formation and propagation of contemporary agendas.

"The sculptor has no palette," remarked the sculptor Étienne-Maurice Falconet, who contributed the entry on sculpture in the *Encyclopédie*, in a text written in 1771.[17] A survey of the modern scholarship on eighteenth-century art might well keep the reader convinced of the priority of painting over sculpture. For while numerous scholarly publications are concerned with eighteenth-century painting, especially in England or in France, sculpture remains largely

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14   In addition to Baker's studies mentioned thus far, of particular importance to the current study are: "Reconsidering the Economy of the Eighteenth-Century Portrait Bust: Roubiliac and Houdon," in *Pygmalions Aufklärung: europäische Skulptur im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Roland Kanz (München, 2006), 132–145; The recent exhibition catalogue: *Fame & Friendship: Pope, Roubiliac, and the Portrait Bust in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven, Conn., 2014); And *The Marble Index: Roubiliac and Sculptural Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven and London, 2015).

15   Given Scherf's numerous publications, the ones referred to here are those that most significantly concentrate on the portrait bust as a genre: Guilhem Scherf, "Le portrait sculpté d'enfant: un genre nouveau en France au XVIIIe siècle," *Péristyles* 26 (2005): 89–98; idem, *Houdon, 1741–1828: statues, portraits sculptés…*, exh. cat. (Paris, 2006); Sébastien Allard, Guilhem Scherf, Mary Anne Stevens, Robert Rosenblum and Vivien Greene, eds., *Citizens and Kings: Portraits in the Age of Revolution 1760–1830*, exh. cat. (London, 2007).

16   These include: Francesco Barocelli, *Jean-Baptiste Boudard: 1710–1768*, exh. cat. (Milano, 1990); Anne L. Poulet and Guilhem Scherf, *Clodion: 1738–1814*, exh. cat. (Paris, 1992); Guilhem Scherf, ed., *Clodion et la sculpture française de la fin du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1993); Gisela Gramaccini, *Jean-Guillaume Moitte (1746–1810): Leben und Werk*, exh. cat. (Berlin, 1993); James David Draper and Guilhem Scherf, *Augustin Pajou, Royal Sculptor, 1730–1809*, exh. cat. (New York and Paris, 1997); Anne L. Poulet et al., *Jean Antoine Houdon: Sculptor of the Enlightenment*, exh. cat. (Washington, 2003); Maraike Bückling and Guilhem Scherf, *Jean-Antoine Houdon: La sculpture sensible*, exh. cat. (Paris, 2010).

17   Étienne Maurice Falconet, "Observations sur la statue de Marc-Aurèle," in *Oeuvres complètes*, 3rd edn. (Paris, 1808; reprint, Genève, 1970), vol. 3, 63.

relegated to the margins of such studies—thus perpetuating the traditional *paragone*, or comparison, between painting and sculpture, and the debate concerning the superiority of one over the other.[18] The relations between painting and sculpture in the age of Enlightenment received relatively recent critical attention in Jacqueline Lichtenstein's 2003 book *La tache aveugle*, which situates this comparison at the center of eighteenth-century artistic thought and practice.[19] My own analysis, and the methodology I employ, follow the assumption that sculptors were not only aware of this discourse but also participated in it, expressing themselves above all through their works. In the context of such a comparison between painting and sculpture, the genre of the portrait bust is particularly intriguing: for in spite of the conventional agreement concerning the superiority of painting over sculpture, which persisted well into the modern age, this particular genre was distinguished ever since the Renaissance for its perceived intellectual charge, which was related to its association with antiquity.

The Renaissance portrait bust has been described by Irving Lavin as representing a part of a whole body: "deliberately emphasizing that it is only a fragment, the Renaissance bust evokes the complete individual—that sum total of physical and psychological characteristics to which contemporaries already referred as the 'whole man.'"[20] These qualities continued to develop in Baroque busts, in which austerity and severity gave way to a more dramatic quality and dynamic compositions, marking a shift towards a more realistic style. Baroque busts revealed a new interest in psychological depth, while demonstrating an ability to capture the essential character of the subjects.[21] Filled with pathos and grandeur, they were devoted exclusively to the portrayal of an individual. The eighteenth-century portrait bust acquired functions that

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18   On some aspects of this issue in relation to the scholarship of sculpture, see Sarah Blake-McHam, ed., *Looking at Italian Renaissance Sculpture* (Cambridge and New York, 1998), 6–9 and 12–15.

19   Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *La tache aveugle: essai sur les relations de la peinture et de la sculpture à l'age modern* (Paris, 2003), published in English as *The Blind Spot: An Essay on the Relations between Painting and Sculpture in the Modern Age*, trans. Chris Miller (Los Angeles, 2008); On the persistence of the *Paragone* polemic in *Ancien Régime* France, see also Anne Betty Weinshenker, *A God or a Bench: Sculpture as a Problematic Art during the Ancien Régime* (Oxford and New York, 2008), chapter 4, 159–220.

20   Irving Lavin, "On Illusion and Allusion in Italian Sixteenth-Century Portrait Busts," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 119 (1975): 353.

21   Andrea Bacchi, Catherine Hess, and Jennifer Montagu, with the assistance of Anne-Lise Desmas, eds., *Bernini and the Birth of Baroque Portrait Sculpture*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles, 2008).

were related to epistemic and social transformations: its realistic or naturalist style and association with actual individuals was, as I noted above, strongly tied to the modern construction of the self.[22] At the same time, its allusion to ancient imagery endowed it with a dialectical character, which, parallel to the formation of a new public identity, distinguished it from its Early-Modern antecedents in terms of its ability to simultaneously represent a particular individual, an ideal person, and a collective form of selfhood attributed to the public as a social entity.

A consideration of the relations between painting and sculpture in the eighteenth century cannot be complete without addressing the theoretical model of the relations between painting and the beholder developed in Michael Fried's groundbreaking book *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, which was published in 1980. Fried's analysis of French painting in the second half of the eighteenth century reveals an attempt to establish a new relationship between painting and the beholder, which asserts the autonomy of the work of art. This "supreme fiction," as Fried calls it, was achieved through the depiction of characters engrossed in a self-enclosed pictorial world. Absorbed by one another or self-absorbed in a manner that asserts their own 'primacy,' these characters exclude or 'obliviate' the beholder, while eliciting in him or her a similarly absorptive state in relation to the painting. Fried thus uses the term 'absorption' to describe a representational convention whose exploration of the conditions of spectatorship exceeds the limits of realism. He then contrasts this absorptive state with what he defines as "theatricality"—that is, the quality of an image that acknowledges the presence of the beholder. Drawing on Diderot's aesthetic writings and art criticism, as well as on other critical texts written at the time,

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22   The formation of the unique self is widely recognized as an eighteenth-century phenomenon. Although scholars of the Early Modern period, such as Stephen Greenblatt in his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago, 1980), suggested an earlier development of selfhood, the latter can be seen as a type of social consciousness, strongly tied to concepts of hierarchy. The rise of individualism in the Age of Enlightenment, by contrast, unfolds a more personal and unique perception of selfhood. For some key sources, see John O. Lyons, *The Invention of the Self: The Hinge of Consciousness in the Eighteenth Century* (Carbondale, 1978); Raymond Martin and John Barresi, *Naturalization of the Soul: Self and Personal Identity in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York, 2000); Anthony J. LaVopa, *Fichte: The Self and the Calling of Philosophy, 1762–1799* (Cambridge and New York, 2001); Jerrold E. Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge and New York, 2005); Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth Century England* (New Haven and London, 2006).

Fried argues that the depicted figure's consciousness of being viewed, and by extension the beholder's heightened awareness of the act of viewing, inevitably results in theatricality and in the sacrifice of absorption both as the state represented in the painting and as the state experienced by the viewer.

Fried's influential theoretical model, which he himself recognized as problematic when applied to painted *portraits*, led me to wonder about its potential application to the medium of sculpture, and more specifically to the sculptural portraits examined in this study. Could one speak of a similar kind of autonomous representational sphere despite the inherently 'theatrical' nature of portraiture, and of the portrait bust in particular? By their very definition, portraits are created in order to present a sitter to a beholder. Moreover, the concise and singular nature of the portrait bust limits the artist's ability to depict a sitter absorbed in an activity or engaged with another figure. Yet even given these constraints, there remains the possibility of depicting a state of self-absorption by means of facial expressions and the portrayal of emotions. Considering Fried's model, portrait busts featuring an introverted expression, a smile or laughter, a turn of the head or any other form of active expression that renders the sitter seemingly unaware of the presence of the viewer may be characterized as having an absorptive quality. In addition, as I will show in my analysis of specific busts, the psychological charge of the sculpted portrait, even when it does not capture an explicitly absorptive state, serves to absorb the viewer by operating as a conceptual mirror of his or her own selfhood.[23] So that while Fried creates a dichotomy between absorption and theatricality, my analysis of portrait busts has revealed that elements of these two states may coexist in this particular genre in a more intricate manner. Portraiture presupposes the existence of a beholder, and is designed in order to foster a conceptual relationship between the sitter and the viewer. Moreover, sculpture—in contrast to painting—exists in a three-dimensional space, which is concretely shared by the beholder. A consciousness of the viewing experience is thus inherent to this medium, enhancing its theatrical quality. Yet in contrast to Fried's model of an autonomous, self-enclosed sphere shaped by the depiction of absorptive states, I argue that the sculptural bust could contain the tension

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23   Although Fried's model treats painted portraiture as unable to radically exclude the beholder, his discussion of landscape painting, another lesser genre, acknowledges a general absorptive quality similar to the one I detect in my analysis of the portrait bust: Fried argues that landscape imagery succeeds in generating an absorptive state due to the psychological charge of the 'pastoral,' which seems to absorb the spectator almost as if physically incorporating him or her into the painting. See Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley, 1980), chapter 3.

between self-absorption and interaction with a beholder, and that both these dimensions of the portrait bust contributed to the processing of modern ideas concerning the individual self. Their analysis thus requires the construction of a theoretical model that reflects the intricate interrelation between different models of spectatorship and perception, as well as between eighteenth-century art and culture.

Recognizing portrait busts as cultural agents or central players in the Enlightenment project calls for an in-depth analysis of their intended audience and of the practices surrounding their creation, dissemination, and display. Especially striking in this context is the remarkable prevalence of such busts during the eighteenth century: They were created and reproduced in a range of sizes and media, and displayed as originals and reproductions in the public sphere as well as in domestic spaces—placed above fireplaces and armoires, lining corridors, or flanking doorways. The modern practice of reproducing artworks, and more specifically portrait busts, developed in response to a growing public demand.[24] Throughout the eighteenth century, the rise of a new type of connoisseur and the growing market for small-scale artworks prompted the reproduction of busts in materials less costly than marble, and smaller versions of celebrated portraits were also manufactured in various sizes and media.[25] The most expensive and luxurious of these smaller reproductions were porcelain busts, which were typically placed above fireplaces and commodes.[26] As the demand for sculpted portraits continued to grow, together with a developing bourgeois economy, the Parisian haute-bourgeoisie—which commissioned portraits both for the purpose of self-promotion and as a form of interior decoration—came to constitute a new class of art patrons. They, like the aristocratic owners of such busts, used them as indicators of their own status and alleged intellectual interests.

The prevalence of the portrait busts in both public and private exhibition spaces constituted a platform for the dissemination and implementation of

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24 Malcolm Baker, "Replication, Repetition and Reproduction in Eighteenth Century French Sculpture," in *French Art of the Eighteenth Century at The Huntington*, eds. Shelley M. Bennett and Carolyn Sargentson (New Haven and London, 2008), 443–452; on this matter see also: Lorna Clymer, ed., *Ritual, Routine, and Regime: Repetition in Early Modern British and European Cultures* (Toronto, 2006).

25 Malcolm Baker, "Reconsidering the Economy of the Eighteenth-Century Portrait Bust."

26 For the portrait bust and its setting, see Malcolm Baker, "'A Sort of Corporate Company': The Portrait Bust and Its Setting," in *Return to Life: A New Look at the Portrait Bust*, eds. Penelope Curtis, Peter Funnell, and Nicola Kalinsky, exh. cat. (Leeds, 2000), 20–35; Guilhem Scherf, "Sculpted Portraits, 1770–1830: 'Real Presences'," in *Citizens and Kings*, ed. Allard et al., 29–30.

social, political, and epistemological messages and ideas. A sharp distinction between the private and public spheres, however, is problematic in this historical context: for as historians of sculpture in France and Britain have shown, the transformation of the public sphere during the eighteenth century, and the rise of a societal consciousness, affected the evolution of sculpture.[27] At that time, especially from the middle of the century onwards, the clearly imposed boundaries between public and private spaces and functions became increasingly blurred—a process that paralleled the substantial growth of exhibition and Salon culture.[28] Sculpture, and in particular portrait busts, which were traditionally considered to be a public medium, entered the private domain; at the same time, busts designated for display in domestic settings were also exhibited, upon their creation, at the public Salon. Even when they were subsequently displayed in the domestic sphere, such busts were usually placed in reception halls, salons or libraries, which functioned as public spaces. This ambiguity between private and public spaces enables us to read both intimate busts and official ones as charged with the didactic role of delivering political or social messages. In contrast to other genres, the eighteenth-century portrait bust was thus situated on the threshold between private and public art, and its affiliation with either the domestic or the public sphere was contingent upon its display context. Although these busts were never monumental, and were often commissioned by private patrons, their operation was predicated upon an awareness of the public domain. In addition to shaping the public image of the sitters, they were charged with propagating collective social ideals. The widespread reproduction of portrait busts was thus instrumental in endow-

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27   For some accounts of these changes and their effect on the sculptural field, see Dominique Poulot, "Pantheons in Eighteenth Century France: Temple, Museum, Pyramid," in *Pantheons: Transformations of a Monumental Idea*, eds. Richard Wrigley and Matthew Craske (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2004), 124–145; Malcolm Baker, "Public Images for Private Spaces? The Place of Sculpture in the Georgian Domestic Interior," *Journal of Design History* 20 (2007): 309–323; Poulot and Baker base their arguments on Jürgen Habermas's seminal thesis, presented in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, 1989). Critiques of the Habermasian claims noted that his assertions disregard status and inclusivity and relate to the masculine and higher social strata of society—which in fact represents the market for the busts discussed here. See Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

28   Regarding the interweaving of private and public, see Susan Dalton, *Engendering the Republic of Letters: Reconnecting Public and Private Spheres in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Montreal, Que., 2003); Andrew Kahn, ed., *Representing Private Lives of the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2010); Olivier Ferret et al., *Dictionnaire des vies privées (1722–1842)* (Oxford, 2011).

ing this genre with its power as an agent of social and cultural change, and as a central player in the Enlightenment project.[29] These blurred boundaries between the private and public arenas and between subjective and collective identity and experience are fundamentally related to my conceptualization of the portrait bust as a seemingly private yet essentially public concept—as both an index of a unique self and a collective representation of a society whose members, ideally, all share these same traits.

A portrait bust of a smiling Voltaire (fig. 4, discussed in detail in Chapter 1), for instance, operated simultaneously on several levels: on the most explicit level, it captured the likeness of the celebrated philosopher, whose facial expression alludes to his writings and ideas. Yet this bust, when displayed in a private domestic space, implicitly suggested its owner's acquaintance with Voltaire's views, thus affiliating him with the intellectual milieu of his time and bestowing upon him the same air of satisfaction represented by the philosopher's smile. On a third level, the Enlightenment ideals promoted by the image of Voltaire, a widely admired French celebrity, also defined it as a collective, ideal portrait of French society.

A scrutiny of this portrait calls further attention to the visual motif of the smile, which similarly reveals the interrelation between the personal and social spheres in eighteenth-century France. Diderot's comment concerning the gravity and solemnity of sculpture in the Salon of 1765—"No laughter in marble"—stands out in stark contradiction to Voltaire's overt smile, and to the prevalence of the smile motif in eighteenth-century portrait busts. The recognition of the smile as a new and widely prevalent motif in sculpted portraits, and in French portraiture more generally, led me to investigate it in relation to the Enlightenment ideal of 'the pursuit of happiness.' The employment of the smile motif and the artistic schemas that developed around it, I argue, were inextricably tied to the bourgeoning interest of French society in the pursuit of happiness, as both a personal and a social goal. This book probes the ways in which portrait busts of intellectual figures, ordinary men and women, children, and royalty were constructed in relation to the cultural ideologies that

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29   Earlier studies of reproduction of art in the eighteenth century focused on different economic aspects: apart from Baker's extensive writings on the matter, Guilhem Scherf has examined the Parisian market of reproductions of busts, focusing on the studio of Jean-Antoine Houdon: Scherf, "Houdon, 'Above All Modern Artists'," in *Jean Antoine Houdon*, ed. Poulet et al., 17–26, and Katie Scott has explored issues of authorship and copyright—which may illuminate the field of art in general despite centering on paintings and prints: Scott, "Authorship, the Académie, and the Market in Early Modern France," *Oxford Art Journal.* 21 (1998): 29–41.

defined these groups. The specific meaning of the smile motif, and its role as an index of happiness, I suggest, was contingently formed in relation to these different social groups and to their cultural agendas.

Colin Jones relates the emergence of the smile in eighteenth-century portraiture to new developments in dentistry;[30] others have interpreted it as a decorous act—a smile of propriety that represented not only the sitter's mood, but also his good manners.[31] Kenneth Clark, followed by other scholars, referred to this type of fairly restrained smile as "a smile of reason," using Houdon's bust of Voltaire, which I described above, as an example.[32] The current study, by contrast, relates this motif to a larger epistemological shift concerning the modern process of individualization. It relates the representation of smiles to the burgeoning interest in introspection and self-exposure and to the concepts of 'sentiment' and 'sympathy,' which were as central to Enlightenment thought as the celebration of reason and the unprecedented interest in worldly pleasure and happiness.

Sentiment and sympathy are both experiences related to interpersonal and social behavior, and are often triggered by looking at someone else's facial expression. These experiences, which are biologically conditioned, are shared by people throughout the history of human civilization.[33] These two terms figured prominently in Western philosophy in the second half of the eighteenth century: The concept of sympathy was introduced by Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which was published in London in 1759 and had a

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30   Cultural historian Colin Jones used Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun's *Self-Portrait with Her Daughter* (see chapter 2, fig. 20), in which the painter's smile exposes a part of her teeth, in order to establish an argument relating the emergence of smiles in eighteenth-century France to contemporary innovations in the field of medicine—and especially to the French supremacy in the field of dentistry. These important innovations most definitely played a part in the cultural and social shifts that promoted the act of laughing. Yet this argument does not account for representations of subtle smiles that do not expose the teeth—a much more prevalent motif in the portraiture of the time. See Colin Jones, "Incorruptible Teeth, or, The French Smile Revolution," *Cabinet* 17 (2005), 97–100; see also his "Pulling Teeth in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *Past and Present* 166 (2000), 100–145, and *The Smile Revolution in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford and New York, 2014).

31   Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg, eds., *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge, 1993, 1st edn. 1991).

32   Kenneth Clark, "The Smile of Reason," *The Listener* 81 (1969): 607–612.

33   Regarding cultural similarities and differences in studies of expression and their effects, see Paul Ekman, E. Richard Sorenson and Wallace V. Friesen, "Pan-Cultural Elements in Facial Displays of Emotion," *Science* 164 (1969): 86–88; Iranaeus Eibl-Ebesfeldt, "Similarities and Differences between Cultures in Expressive Movements," in *Non-Verbal Communication*, ed. Robert Aubrey Hinde (Cambridge, 1972), 297–314.

huge impact in France even prior to the issuing of the first French translation in 1764. Although Smith did not refer directly to smiles as indices of sympathy, smiles were awarded serious scientific attention in eighteenth-century French and English studies on physiognomy and on the effect of facial expressions. And although it was not until the nineteenth century that smiles were empirically proven to be correlated with sympathy and compassion and to stimulate a sensation of happiness in both the smiling subject and in the observer,[34] one can assume that these facts were intuited during the eighteenth century. As present-day studies have scientifically proven, a smile makes us perceive the person before us as sympathetic, while also eliciting in us a sympathetic response and contributing to a more favorable perception of the person and of his intelligence, capacity for leadership, optimism, sincerity and kindness. Following this rational, a smiling portrait of the king, for example, would have communicated a sympathetic image of the sovereign, while also provoking the viewer's sympathy. In an eighteenth-century context, moreover, the representation of a smile was not only evocative of the contemporary ideals of introspection and self-revelation, while representing an accessible, earthy, sensitive, self-conscious, and sympathetic individual; it was also instrumental in offering a collective portrait of an enlightened society concerned with the ideals of individualism and equality, which were seen as inextricably connected to the pursuit of happiness.

This new pursuit was tied to a major change in the conception of pleasure and happiness, leading from an objectivist approach that related these experiences to a state of eternal, heavenly bliss to the subjectivist, even hedonistic understanding of pleasure and happiness in Enlightenment thought, where it is related to the active pursuit of earthly experiences.[35] In this context, happiness was recognized as a fundamental human right, as given expression in 1776 in the American Declaration of Independence:

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34   Duchenne de Boulogne, *Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine, ou Analyse électro-physiologique de l'expression des passions applicable à la pratique des arts plastiques* (Paris, 1862); for recent affirmations of these findings, see Emma Otta et al., "The Effects of Smiling and Head Tilting on Person Perception," *The Journal of Psychology* 128 (1993): 323–331; Hiroko Ichikawa and Junshiro Makino, "Function of Congruent Facial Responses to Smiling and Frowning," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 105 (2007): 838–851.

35   Paul Hazard, *The European Mind 1680–1715*, trans. J. Lewis May (Harmondsworth, 1964), 335–347; For the new circumstances that promoted the pursuit of happiness and pleasure, see Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Enlightened Pleasures: Eighteenth-Century France and the New Epicurianism* (New Haven and London, 2010), esp. 71–102, in which art's agency is analyzed.

> […] that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their
> Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life,
> Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

In Paris, the most indulgent capital in Europe at the time, happiness began
to occupy the place formerly occupied by religion; it became, to quote from
a letter written by Voltaire in 1726, "the great and only concern."[36] In the
Encyclopédie—the greatest intellectual initiative of the Enlightenment, which
was edited by Diderot and d'Alembert and published in 1751, Voltaire referred
to happiness as a sequence of happy events, a state of continuous pleasures.[37]
Yet happiness was also to be pursued, as Rousseau wrote in 1762:

> We must be happy, dear Emile; it is the end of every feeling creature; it is
> the first desire taught us by nature, and the only one which never leaves
> us. But where is happiness? Who knows? Every one seeks it, and no one
> finds it. We spend our lives in the search and we die before the end is
> attained.[38]

Since the earthly expression of pleasure was denied during the seventeenth
century, smiles, not to mention laughter, were excluded from respectable por-
traits. In eighteenth-century painting, happiness was conveyed for the first time
in the history of art neither as an allegorical representation nor as a fleeting
celebratory emotion, but rather as a representation of a distinct epistemologi-
cal state.[39] Eighteenth-century painting not only consistently depicted joyous
moments in life, but also made manifest modern man's attempts to shape his
life on earth by actively engaging with an array of pleasurable experiences and
objects. Portraits featured smiling sitters, while the many conversation pieces
of the era celebrated sociability as a signifier of happiness. The intense artistic
focus on the representation of happiness was paralleled by the establishment

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36   Quoted by Darrin M. McMahon, "The History of Happiness and Contemporary Happiness
      Studies" (paper presented at the conference *New Directions in the Study of Happiness*, held
      in University of Notre Dame, Indiana, October 22–24, 2006).

37   Voltaire, "Félicité," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des
      métiers*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (Paris, 1751–1772), vol. 6, 465.

38   Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, trans. Barbara Foxley (Waiheke Island, 2009), 900.

39   William Barcham, "Picturing the Pursuit of Happiness in the Veneto Countryside," in
      Happiness or Its Absence in Art, eds. Ronit Milano and William Barcham, (Newcastle,
      2013), 91–106.

of peaceful, rural estates, dairies, and other kinds of rustic retreats designed to promote the attainment of this state.

Yet despite the widespread cultural and artistic concern with the pursuit of happiness, this concept remained both intricate and elusive, and its procurement was believed to require major efforts. This intricacy is attested to by Jean Pestré's exposition on the term *happiness* in the *Encyclopédie*:

> [happiness] Is taken here for a state, a situation we wish would last without changing; and in that, happiness is different from pleasure, which is a nice feeling, but short and transient, and which can never be a state. All men are united in their desire to be happy. [...] But the human condition does not endure such a state: every moment of our life cannot be filled with pleasures. The most delicious state has many languid intervals. After the first alertness of feeling has gone, the best that can happen is to become in a tranquil state. Our most perfect happiness in this life is therefore, as we said at the beginning of this article, a tranquil state.[40]

This definition of happiness as a state of tranquility is highly compatible with the still and calm quality of eighteenth-century portrait busts, which stands out in comparison to the dynamic and dramatic nature of their immediate precedents. The smiles in these portraits are usually subtle, and are characterized by a closed mouth and a peaceful and graceful expression. And although these portraits are somewhat restrained, both the design of the figures and the sculpting technique itself, which sometimes results in a relatively coarse surface, bespeak a sense of playfulness. Notwithstanding these general traits, however, this study's point of departure is that happiness was a versatile and malleable concept given expression in a range of representational formulae and motifs and in different social and intellectual contexts. My examination of portrait busts of eighteenth-century philosophers, whose representational formula centers on the motifs of the bare chest and the smile, reveals how beliefs about the achievement of individual happiness were related to the intellectual ideals of self-exploration and self-exposure. By contrast, eighteenth-century constructions of female happiness were tied to the fulfillment of maternal duties, and represented by means of a formula that combines a semi-nude breast and a smile. The smile motif is less prevalent in portraits of children and men, which I suggest betray a sense of disillusion related to a collective experience of crisis or transition. Finally, during this period of cultural and political change, the smiling portraits of the French king can be read as a means of

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40   Jean Pestré, "Bonheur," in *Encyclopédie*, eds. Diderot and d'Alembert, vol. 2, 322.

representing the alleged happiness and well-being of the public. Taken together, these different representational formulae reveal the complexity of the concept of happiness as it was understood in eighteenth-century France.

The following five chapters examine five different categories of portrait busts, which are each defined and analyzed as articulating a distinct set of shared themes and ideas. Chapter 1 focuses on busts of eighteenth-century French philosophers, including Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, and additional thinkers, and addresses the stylistic and thematic tension between their generic quality, which was further enhanced by the prevailing practice of reproduction, and a cultural interest in individuality. I argue that these busts constituted hybrid images reflective of the dualism of Enlightenment identity: they included an emphasis both on a collective sense of patriotic virtue represented by a classicizing formula, and on self-revelation and singularity. The appropriation of this formula for the representation of contemporary sculptors, moreover, serves to reveal the artists' perception of themselves as central players in the Enlightenment project, while underscoring the interrelations between art, society, and intellectual life in eighteenth-century France.

Chapter 2 explores sculpted portraits of French women, and argues that the motifs of the smile and the semi-nude breast characteristic of these busts constituted a new and unique artistic formula that directly related the pursuit of happiness to maternal delight and to the pleasure experienced by the female body. Once again, the complexity of Enlightenment culture is reflected in the dual nature of these busts, which combine traditionally erotic representations of women with new conceptions of their natural role as devoted mothers. In this context, the classicizing motif of nudity is reinterpreted as an allusion to the act of nursing, which together with the motif of the smile symbolizes maternal delight. Considering the widespread distribution and display of such portraits in eighteenth-century Paris, my reading of these works calls attention to their central role as cultural vehicles used to articulate and disseminate an emerging ideal of femininity, and thus to participate in the shaping of a new perception of female identity during the French Enlightenment.

Chapter 3 centers on portrait busts of children, which emerged during this period as a burgeoning artistic phenomenon. This chapter argues that such portraits should be distinguished from generic images of childhood, while relating them to the new and intense cultural interest in childhood and in the themes of self-exploration and self-expression. Tying the portraits of particular, identifiable children to the notion of a pure, innocent, and natural self, I suggest that such busts, traditionally read as emblems of innocence, should be reinterpreted in relation to the emergence of modern selfhood.

Chapter 4 examines the third vertex of the family triangle, which consists of portrait busts of French men. Yet in contrast to the distinct artistic formulae that can be identified in busts of women or children, men are represented in a variety of styles, and their portraits feature a range of facial expressions and types of clothing. This multiplicity of representational strategies, I argue, both reflected and contributed to the ambivalent perception of masculinity that characterized this historical period. Yet rather than reading these images as bespeaking a renunciation of masculinity, I view them as representing a transitional moment in the formulation of a modern masculinity characterized by sensitivity, tenderness, and a natural quality.

After exploring the ways in which the portrait bust shaped and transmitted ideas concerning new constructions of the individual self, of gender, of family structure, and of society at large, I turn in Chapter 5 to investigate the effect of these Enlightenment ideas on the pre-revolutionary political sphere. My analysis of portrait busts representing the last three kings of the ancien régime reveals the attempts made by France's sovereigns to conform to new collective social and political narratives centered on the reformulation of masculinity, of human happiness, and of the relationship between the French people and their ruler.

The aim of this book is to explore the genre of the portrait bust in pre-revolutionary France as both a reflection of significant cultural themes and as an active agent involved in their formulation. In doing so, I hope to reveal the surprisingly rich expressive possibilities embedded in this concise medium, which provides us with a collective portrait of French society and culture during one of the most seismic moments in its history.

"He is a Philosopher": Individual versus Collective Identity

> *He kneads clay and marble and reads and meditates; he is gentle and caustic, serious and jocular; he is a philosopher, believes in nothing, and knows why.*
>
> —DENIS DIDEROT[1]

The delicate relations between naturalism and classicism have long preoccupied scholars studying eighteenth-century art. The theoretical distinctions between these two aesthetic schools, which persisted throughout the Early Modern era, became increasingly ambiguous during the eighteenth century. In France, the realistic quality of sculpted portrait busts, which was notably absent from other artistic genres created during the Rococo period, defined them as one of the most significant arenas in which these relations were negotiated. As Linda Walsh has noted, in the Rococo portrait bust "surface naturalism and transitory ('living') effects of facial expression were seen as desirable."[2] Yet despite its departure from the artistic schemas of Rococo art, Walsh recognized in it "the 'inner' essence of a natural form."[3] This chapter reads portrait busts of French philosophers characterized by a classicizing bare chest as sites of hybridity, which combined realistic conventions of representation with the presentation of an inner essence by means of classicizing motifs, while tying the works to the epistemic shifts taking place during this period. Examining these busts in relation to the dialectics of naturalism versus classicism, I also probe their function as communication devices, focusing on the phenomenological dimensions of the relationship

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1 Denis Diderot writing about his friend, the sculptor Falconet: Diderot, *Salon de 1765*, in *Oeuvres completes*, vol. 14: *Salon de 1765*, eds. Bukdahl, Lorenceau and May, 289.

2 Linda Walsh, "The "Hard Form" of Sculpture: Marble, Matter and Spirit in European Sculpture From the Enlightenment through Romanticism," *Modern Intellectual History* 5 (2008): 458.

3 Ibid., 456.

FIGURE 1 *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, Denis Diderot, *1771, terracotta, h. 46 cm (with base: 52 cm), Paris, Musée du Louvre.*
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (MUSÉE DU LOUVRE) / GÉRARD BLOT

between the viewing subject and the sculptural object.[4] In doing so, I suggest that the simultaneous employment of naturalistic and classicizing characteristics was used to create a conceptual space in which individual and collective identities were shaped and entered into interaction with one another.

The portrait bust of the French philosopher Denis Diderot, which was created by the sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon in 1771 (fig. 1), clearly represents a classicizing tendency evoked by means of the sitter's bare chest, the round cut at the bottom of the bust, and the natural, short hair visible in the absence of a wig.[5] Yet these generic characteristics, and the portrait's remote air, stand out in contrast to Diderot's individualized features—his slightly open lips,

4   I am building here on Alex Potts' perception of sculptural objects as the embodiment of the physical power they wield over their beholders. See Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*.

5   On this bust, see Francis Watson, "Diderot and Houdon: A Little Known Bust," in *The Artist and the Writer in France: Essays in Honour of Jean Seznec*, eds. Francis Haskell, Anthony Levi and Robert Shackleton (Oxford, 1974), 16; Poulet et al., *Jean Antoine Houdon*, no. 19, 141–151; The classicizing motifs were employed also in earlier busts of philosophers and were known to eighteenth-century viewers as attributes of philosophers. See Frits Scholten, "Sandrart's Philosophers on the 'Amsterdam Parnassus'," *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 57 (2009): 326–341.

which appear about to speak, and his concentrated and engaging gaze. This sort of incongruity—the bust's conflicted indexicality—lies at the heart of this chapter.[6] Significantly, this classicizing style is far more prevalent in portrait busts of French philosophers than in representations of other figures. In the eighteenth century, such idealized, classicizing images of 'Great Men' appeared throughout France in both the public and the domestic spheres, giving rise to a generic type of image that represented specific intellectual and patriotic values, while embodying an ideal vision of collective French identity. As Erika Naginski claims in *Sculpture and Enlightenment*, the creation of public statues representing great French thinkers was part of a larger Enlightenment project centered on instilling in the public an admiration for civic virtues. Yet while Naginski, referring to monumental sculpture, identifies an "allegorical shift from a material world of particularities to a universal personification",[7] I suggest that portrait busts of such thinkers, which were intentionally non-monumental, enabled the viewer to symbolically assume the qualities of the represented philosopher while participating in the conceptual construction of French society and culture. In this sense, the busts in question contributed to the fusion between the ideals of individual and collective identity inherent to Enlightenment thought.

Before I turn to further scrutinize the tensions embedded in such portrait busts, however, it is important to address the market conditions underlying their production. During the pre-revolutionary period, busts were usually commissioned in marble, either by the sitter himself or by another patron. When the represented figure was a celebrated individual, the contract often specified the production of several replicas, sometimes in terracotta or plaster, while market demand led at times to the production and sale of additional copies. Beginning in the 1760s, the creation of expensive, small-scale porcelain reproductions of such portraits in France resulted in a gradual shift away from the use of porcelain exclusively for different types of genre scenes and allegorical representations.[8] The market demand for portrait busts of contemporary

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6   The debate over the 'beau idéal' versus the 'beau réel' had been discussed in other contexts: Dorothy Johnson, "Le réalisme classique ou le "beau réel" dans la sculpture français, 1790–1816," in *Le progrès des arts réunis: 1763–1815: mythe culturel des origines de la Révolution à la fin de l'Empire*, eds. Daniel Rabreau and Bruno Tollon (Bordeaux, 1992), 337–344; Christian Michel, *L'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture (1648–1793): la naissance de l'École française* (Geneva and Paris, 2012), esp. 348–362; The complexity of Classicism is also presented in Guillaume Faroult et al., *L'Antiquité rêvée: Innovations et résistances au XVIIIe siècle*, exh. cat. (Paris, 2010).

7   Erika Naginski, *Sculpture and Enlightenment* (Los Angeles, 2009), 265.

8   Samuel Taylor, "Artists and *Philosophes* as Mirrored by Sèvres and Wedgwood," in *The Artist and the Writer in France*, eds. Haskell, Levi and Shackleton, 21–39.

figures reflected the interests of the period's sitters, patrons, and consumers—interests shaped by a celebration of ideals such as individuality, naturalness, and truthfulness. These busts, which embodied a tension between a particular physiognomy and the representation of collective traits, as well as between the importance of the moment and timelessness, came to constitute a phenomenological site in which the viewer's position became integral to the meaning of the work. The multiple interpretive possibilities presented by such portraits were further enhanced by the diversity of consumers who purchased and displayed them in order to attest to their acquaintance with the writings of the represented philosopher, to situate themselves within the intellectual milieu of Paris, and to declare their affiliation with prevailing cultural ideologies.

The increased demand for portrait busts of French philosophers paralleled—and was to a large extent influenced by—their growing veneration in the decades preceding the Revolution.[9] Previous studies concerned with images of Great Men focused on the representation of a 'significant moment' and the formation of national identity.[10] This study, by contrast, concentrates on the personal and more intimate qualities of these Great Men as articulated through the non-monumental medium of the portrait bust. An important factor in this context is the French admiration, during this period, for contemporary individuals rather than for the intellectual heroes of past eras. This fact resulted in a new perception of the portrait bust, as its traditional commemorative role was replaced by the representation of contemporary military, political and intellectual pursuits. Oddly enough, the greatest demand for busts of prominent French philosophers was in North America, Russia, England, and other countries in continental Europe, rather than in France itself. These sculptural images were often commissioned by foreign royalty, yet were generally not ordered by the French royal court, which was often criticized by the very thinkers they represented. At the same time, such busts were extremely popular in the Parisian intellectual milieu, which included a large part of the aristocracy as well as the haute bourgeoisie. Those who could not afford to

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9   Jean-Claude Bonnet, *Naissance du panthéon*: *Essai sur le culte des grandes hommes* (Paris, 1998); Edouard Pommier, *Théories du portrait: de la Renaissance aux Lumières* (Paris, 1998).

10   This term was coined by Francis H. Dowley in "D'Angiviller's grands hommes and the Significant Moment," *The Art Bulletin* 39 (1957): 259–277; see also David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2001); Central to this discourse is the political project for a Gallery of Great Men, which was initiated in 1776 by the comte d'Angiviller, director of the *Bâtiments du Roi*. See Andrew Lockwood McClellan, "D'Angiviller's 'Great Men' of France and the Politics of the Parlements," *Art History* 13 (1990): 174–191; Guilhem Scherf, "La galerie des 'grands hommes' au coeur des salles consacrées à la sculpture française du XVIIIe siècle," *Revue du Louvre* 5/6 (1993): 58–67.

commission a marble or porcelain bust acquired terracotta or plaster versions, which were widely reproduced and sold by the artists themselves as well as by art dealers. Portraits of contemporary philosophers were the most popular type of bust sold on the French private market, which generally embraced portrait busts of all types.

The emphasis on the particular and on the individual evident in these portraits is related to a significant eighteenth-century development: the conception of the unique self and the idealization of the related values of authenticity, truth, and nature.[11] These ideals, which were promoted by contemporary philosophers, were given expression in a realistic portrayal of their faces, shifting the emphasis from idealization to verisimilitude. A case in point is the terracotta portrait of Diderot presented above; commissioned by prince Galitzine, a close friend of Diderot, this bust was created by Houdon in 1771. Houdon did not attempt to offer a flattering physical image of the philosopher: Diderot is presented without a wig, while his fallen eyelids, sunken cheeks, and the wrinkles on his forehead are clearly those of a fifty-eight year-old man. When the bust was exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1771, the celebrated philosopher's laconic, yet positive, response was: "Très ressemblant."[12] This view that the portrait was a striking likeness was shared by Pidansat de Mairobert, who discussed this Salon in his *Mémoires secrets*: "One must praise the fire, the expression M. Houdon was able to put into his work."[13] And Daudet de Jossan wrote that: "The bust of Diderot, whom the flame of genius seems to animate, struck all beholders with admiration and astonishment."[14]

Houdon, who was born in Versailles in 1741, began sculpting at the age of nine and underwent the long training process prescribed by the Académie Royale, apprenticing under René-Michel Slodtz. In 1761 he won the Prix de Rome, and subsequently studied in Italy from 1764 to 1768. He was admitted to the Académie Royale in 1770. While striving to receive royal commissions and

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11   For some sources on the centrality of nature to Enlightenment thought and art, see Jean Ehrard, *L'Idée de la nature en France dans la première moitié du XVIIIᵉ siècle* (Paris, 1970); Aline Magnien, *La nature et l'antique, la chair et le contour: Essai sur la sculpture française du XVIIIᵉ siècle*, (Oxford, 2004); Nathaniel Wolloch, *History and Nature in the Enlightenment: Praise of the Mastery of Nature in the Eighteenth-Century Historical Literature* (Farnham, 2011).

12   Denis Diderot, *Salon of 1771* in *Héros et martyrs: IV. Salons de 1769, 1771, 1775, 1781; Pensées détachées sur la peinture*, ed. Else Marie Bukdahl et al. (Paris, 1995), 242.

13   Pidansat de Mairobert in *Les Salons des "Mémoires secrets" 1767–1787*, ed. Bernadette Fort (Paris, 1999), 97.

14   *Deloynes Collection* (Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes), vol. 9, no. 141.

to create monumental works, Houdon earned a living as a portraitist, becoming one of the most celebrated and successful artists of his time. He usually modeled his sculptures in clay, and the final versions were created in marble, bronze, plaster, or clay. Technically skilled in all of these mediums, Houdon sometimes took full charge of creating reproductions, while in other cases he only contributed the finishing touches to copies made by his assistants.

Houdon's realistic and sensitive portrayal of Diderot, which was widely admired, led to the production of numerous marble, bronze, terracotta and plaster copies, as well as to several smaller-scale versions of the bust. One marble version of it was completed and exhibited in the Salon of 1773, followed by several replicas made in Houdon's studio—some of which were acquired by important European courts.[15] Significantly, despite the large number of copies and versions of Diderot's bust that were produced by Houdon, Diderot is the only Enlightenment figure in Houdon's portrait gallery who was depicted according to a single typology, with a bare head and nude upper torso. By contrast, most sculptural representations of philosophers included two or three busts of the same figure: a version designed *à la Française*, with contemporary French clothes and a wig; another, bare-chested bust *à l'antique*, without a wig, and usually with a rounded bottom; and sometimes a third version that included classicizing drapery.

Diderot, who was born in 1713, was one of the prominent figures of the French Enlightenment. A philosopher, art critic, and writer, he is best known for serving as the co-founder and editor of the *Encyclopédie*, to which he also contributed entries. During the 1750s, he wrote most of his major literary works and plays, which were characterized by a naturalistic style. From 1759 onwards, he also contributed notes on the Paris Salon to the literary newsletter *Correspondance littéraire*, founded by his friend Friedrich Melchior Grimm. Catherine the Great of Russia was one of Diderot's most prominent patrons. She hosted him in her court, where he remained, due to a long illness, between October 1773 and March 1774. Diderot befriended not only other philosophers, but also several artists, among whom were the sculptors Jean-Baptiste Pigalle and Étienne-Maurice Falconet.

The themes of simplicity and truthfulness in art, which were both related to the eighteenth-century conceptualization of nature, were explicitly promoted by French philosophers during this period. In his review of the Salon of 1769, Diderot wrote the following regarding the portraits by Maurice Quentin de la Tour:

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15   For the marble and the replicas, see Poulet et al., *Jean Antoine Houdon*, 146; Faroult et al., *L'Antiquité rêvée*, 404, no. 135.

> I have never seen such examples of simplicity and truth; not a shadow of
> mannerism, just pure, artless nature, no pretention in the touch, no
> assignment of contrast in the colors, no discomfort in the position.[16]

The entry 'Portrait' in the *Encyclopédie*, which was written by Louis de Jaucourt
and published in 1751, stated that:

> The principal merit of this style of painting is the exact resemblance that
> consists in expressing the character and physiognomy of the persons rep-
> resented […]. In every portrait, it cannot be emphasized too strongly,
> resemblance is the essential perfection. Anything that may contribute to
> weakening or disguising it is an absurdity; that is why any ornament
> introduced into a portrait at the expense of the effect of the head is an
> inconstancy.[17]

The writer's objective was not solely to promote verisimilitude, but also to con-
vince his readers that the artist must capture the unique characteristics of the
sitter. Based on his conversations with Pigalle, Diderot similarly asserted that:
"It is in the face where a particular life, character and physiognomy reside."[18]
Moving our gaze downward along Houdon's bust of Diderot, one notices that
the sculptor maintained a sense of life in the sitter's neck while truncating the
nude chest *à l'antique*—a choice that seems peculiar considering the natural-
ism of the portrait, since appreciation of the importance of the moment, of
reality and simplicity, would seem to have called for contemporary clothes.

Such a stylistic incongruence, however, was highly common in portrait
busts of contemporary philosophers, as is made similarly evident by Augustin
Pajou's portrait of the comte de Buffon (fig. 2).[19] The evocation of the ancients
in the versions created *à l'antique* was deployed by Pajou and by other artists
in order to allude to the historical role played by their celebrated contempo-
rary sitters, and to symbolize their eternal life. Nevertheless, the bare chest and
the rounded bottom, two traditionally classicizing motifs, are mitigated by the
graceful and dynamic portrayal of Buffon's face and by his lavish and playful

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16   Denis Diderot, *Salon of 1769*, in *Œuvres*, ed. Laurent Versini (Paris, 1994–1997), vol. 4, 846.

17   Louis de Jaucourt, in *Encyclopédie*¸ eds. Diderot and d'Alembert, vol. 13, 153–154.

18   Denis Diderot, *Pensées détachées sur la peinture* (1776), in *Héros et martyrs*, ed. Bukdahl
      et al., 448.

19   On this bust, see Draper and Scherf, *Augustin Pajou*, no. 114, 290–292; For Buffon's *à la
      Française* portrait (Paris, Musée du Louvre), see Ibid., no. 111, 277–279; For his draped *à
      l'antique* bust, see Ibid., no. 116, 293–294.

FIGURE 2   *Augustin Pajou*, Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, c. *1775, marble, h. 42 cm* (*with base: 59 cm*)*, Paris, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle.*
IMAGE: WORK IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

ringlets. The result provides the viewer with what seems to be an ambiguous representation of a contemporary philosopher, one fusing realistic, classicizing, and Rococo conventions.

Born in Paris in 1730, Pajou was a pupil of Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, and had won the Prix de Rome when he was eighteen. His profound academism and his regard for the intellect epitomize the spirit of Enlightenment thought. Pajou's sitter, Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, was born in Montbard, in Burgundy, in 1707. A naturalist, mathematician and cosmologist, he was named director of the Jardin du Roi (later the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle) in 1739. Ten years later he published, at the king's expense, the first three volumes of his *Histoire naturelle*, which evolved into his life project. He became a member of the Académie Française in 1753.

Buffon's bare-chested bust was ordered from Pajou in 1773 by the comte d'Angiviller together with a terracotta copy and a full-length monument representing the philosopher, which was a court commission destined for the Cabinet d'histoire naturelle. D'Angiviller's commission of the two busts, which were later mentioned in his inventory, underscores his admiration for Buffon. The marble bust was probably exhibited in the Salon of 1775, where it received

mixed responses: the *Mercure de France* called it a "piece with character and strong expression";[20] the author of the "Glance at the Salon of 1775 by a Blind Man," meanwhile, cited a bust of "M. de Buffon with straggly hair like an actress at the Opéra, I have no idea why."[21] Indeed, given that most such busts featured short, natural hair, the appearance of Buffon's hair must be accounted for by the fact that this bust was a study for the full-length figure, which required a more dynamic composition than the one prevalent in portrait busts. The head is turned to the right, and the sitter's eyes—the irises flatly carved by Pajou with small pupils—seem to be straining to take in everything they can. This detail corresponded to the actual weakness of Buffon's eyesight, which prevented him from gazing fixedly at any object. Buffon's personal, particular characteristics are thus given substantial expression, despite the generic *à l'antique* style of the sculpture's lower part.

A similarly realistic choice is also evident in Houdon's later bust of the comte de Buffon (fig. 3).[22] Comparing this bust to Pajou's version of the same sitter, Gaston Brière wrote in 1913 that:

> There is more finesse, penetration in Houdon, and in Pajou's manner a tendency toward effect and the theatrical; Houdon sees the man and Pajou wants to make his genius felt.[23]

Both artists, however, use the *à l'antique* formula for similar reasons, placing the image of the sitter within a classical artistic and cultural sphere. Houdon's portrait of Buffon was commissioned in 1781, at the height of the philosopher's fame and a few years before his death. The commission came from Catherine the Great of Russia, who had a profound interest in the French philosophers of the period.[24] She wrote Grimm in 1781, asking him to "[...] get me a white marble bust of M. de Buffon and to please have Houdon do it." She added that "M. de Buffon has a very distinguished place in my thoughts and [...] I regard him as the foremost mind of his kind in this century."[25] In June 1782, upon the

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20   *Deloynes Collection*, vol. 10, no. 165, 741.

21   Ibid., vol. 10, no. 162, 23.

22   Guilhem Scherf, Julio Heilbron and Gilberta Mendes, eds., *Tesouros do Louvre: Esculturas de Houdon*, trans. Janine Houard and Josiane Cotrim Macieira, exh. cat. (Rio de Janeiro, 2009), 142.

23   Gaston Brière, "Notes sur quelques bustes de Houdon," *Mélanges offerts à M. Henry Lemonnier, Archives de l'art français* 7 (1913): 357.

24   Inna Gorbatov, *Catherine the Great and French Philosophers of the Enlightenment: Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot and Grim* (Bethesda, 2006).

25   Quoted in Poulet et al., *Jean Antoine Houdon*, 177.
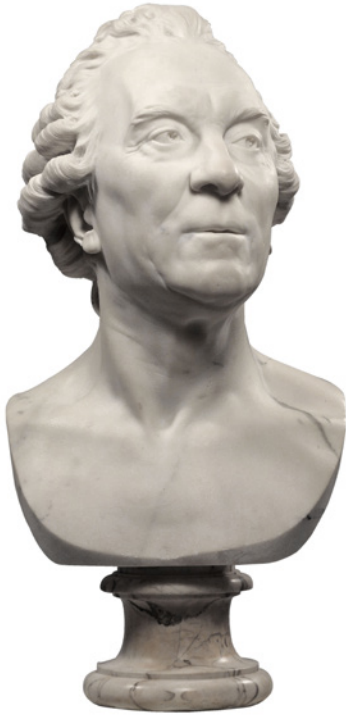
FIGURE 3   *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, *c. 1782, marble, h. 46.5 cm (with base: 65 cm), Paris, Musée du Louvre.*
IMAGE: © MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, DIST. RMN-GRAND PALAIS / PIERRE PHILIBERT

completion of the bust, Buffon's son accompanied it to St. Petersburg, where he dined with the empress and witnessed the installation of his father's portrait in the Hermitage. This original marble version is still on display in the State Hermitage Museum. A marble replica of it (see fig. 3) was exhibited by Houdon in the Salon of 1783.

Houdon's sculpture reproduces the classicizing, truncated style used by Pajou in 1773. As a visitor noted in 1785:

> I find the bust of him [Buffon] by Houdon to be the best likeness; but the sculptor could not render in stone those black eyebrows that shade black eyes, very active under beautiful white hair. The hair was dressed when I saw him, though he was ill; that is one of his obsessions. [. . .] After getting his hair done in the morning, he very often had it done again for supper. He's coiffed with five loose curls; his hair, tied at the back, fell to the middle of his spine.[26]

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26   Marie-Jean Hérault de Séchelles, *Voyage à Montbard* (Paris, 1890), 5.

Houdon took great care in rendering his subject's hair, which is made to appear all the more prominent due to the absence of accessories, using the same formula employed in his bust of Diderot. Yet whereas Diderot's portrait reveals the sitter's natural hair, Buffon's features an elaborate wig, which suited the sitter's interest and personality. This combination of an elaborate coiffure and a bare chest is unusual in busts of philosophers, and can be attributed—as might be the case in Pajou's bust—to Houdon's attempt to convey Buffon's personal characteristics through an emphasis on the sitter's special interest in his coiffure. Most such portraits featured a bare head—a formula followed by Houdon not only in his portrait of Diderot, but also in his famous busts of Voltaire and Rousseau.

The celebrated philosopher, author, and man of letters François-Marie Arouet, better known as Voltaire, sat for Houdon in March 1778, just two months before his death at the age of eighty-three. The back of this marble bust, which is located today in the Musée des beaux-arts in Angers (fig. 4), is inscribed with the words "le prémier fait par Houdon," and is indeed considered to be the artist's first portrait of this famous sitter.[27] The delicate carving of the elderly Voltaire's features conveys his physical frailty, while the sharply cut eyes and stern gaze bespeak his intellectual vigor and moral authority, and the warm smile gracing his face emphasizes the many wrinkles on his sunken cheeks. Wrinkles and bald heads seemed appropriate in such official portraits, which amplified the contemporary ideal of simplicity and exhibited the sitter as a real and accessible person rather than as a lofty figure. The introduction of the smile motif further emphasized the humane character of the sitter, creating an impression of sincerity and self-revelation. Following the classicizing formula used by Houdon in his earlier portrait of Diderot, this bust presents Voltaire with an abbreviated, undraped torso and bare head sporting the sparse remains of his natural hair. It was probably the model for Houdon's other two versions of Voltaire's portrait—a version *à la Française*, in which Voltaire is dressed in French clothes and wears a wig, and a version *à l'antique* with fuller hair, a headband, and a classical garment.[28]

On February 10, 1778, after nearly thirty years in exile (having been banished from Paris by Louis xv due to his political writings, which favored a constitutional monarchy), Voltaire returned to the French capital for the last time. Welcomed by Parisians with admiration and respect, he immersed himself in intense social activity. As he entered the Comédie-Française on March 30 of

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27   Poulet et al., *Jean Antoine Houdon*, no. 23, 152–156; Bückling and Scherf, *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, no. 19, 120–123.

28   For other versions, see Poulet et al., *Jean Antoine Houdon*, no. 24, 157–161 and no. 25, 162–165.
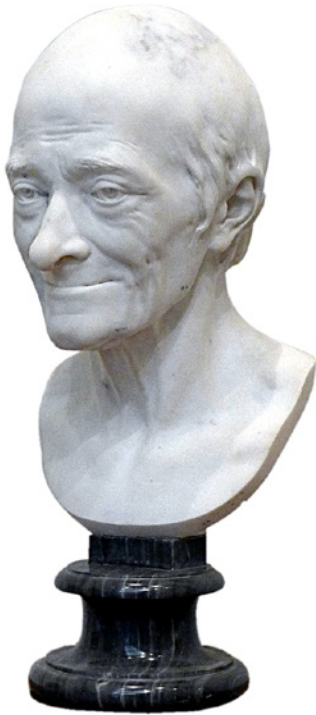
FIGURE 4   *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, Voltaire, *1778, marble, h. 37 cm (with base: 48 cm), Angers, Musée des Beaux-Arts.* IMAGE: MBZT, WORK IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

that year to watch the performance of his play *Irène*, the enthusiastic audience crowned his head with a laurel wreath. Following the performance, the actors spontaneously moved a bust of Voltaire onto the stage, festooning it with flower garlands (fig. 5).[29] This extraordinary event serves to illustrate the significance of the portrait bust at that historical moment, and showcases its indexical function, which was powerful enough to substitute for the actual presence of the sitter. Although Voltaire himself was present in the audience, it was his marble bust—a version *à la française*, which was probably made by Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne in 1748—that was chosen to represent him in the context of this triumphal act. This choice underscores the fact that the portrait being crowned was not perceived to be a representation of Voltaire, the actual individual, but rather a collective image of French virtue that conceptually represented each and every Frenchman and Frenchwoman who could identify with the Enlightenment spirit it embodied. It was for this reason, as I will demonstrate below, that within the private sphere the version sculpted *à la française* was usually preferred over a remote and idealistic representation *à l'antique*.

29   Friedrich Melchior Grimm, *Correspondence littéraire philosophique et critique* (Paris, 1877–1882), vol. 12, 69–73.

FIGURE 5   *Charles-Etienne Gaucher after Jean-Michel Moreau*, Couronnement de Voltaire
(The Crowning of Voltaire), *1782, etching and engraving, 26.8 × 29.7 cm, Washington
DC, National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection.*
IMAGE: COURTESY NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON

Around the time of this legendary event, Houdon was working on his own por-
trait of the philosopher. According to Grimm's account, Voltaire agreed to sit
for Houdon after seeing the sculptor's newly finished portrait of Molière. This
process required no more than two or three sessions, which the philosopher
attended cheerfully.[30] When the bust was completed, in April 1778, Grimm
noted:

> The eyes have so much life, an effect of light so ingeniously handled, that
> M. Greuze himself, in seeing the bust for the first time, initially thought
> that the eyes were made of enamel or some other colored material.[31]

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30   Grimm, May 1778, *Correspondance littéraire*, vol. 12, 104.
31   Ibid.

During this time, Houdon's studio became a public attraction crowded with viewers who wanted to see Voltaire's lifelike image. The number of people flocking to see the bust increased even further after Voltaire's death on May 30, 1778:

> All of Paris goes to the studio of M. Houdon to see a bust of M. Voltaire that is without question the closest likeness of all the portraits one has done of this patriarch.[32]

Although many Parisians were able to obtain an image of Voltaire in some form, an encounter with Houdon's bust constituted a special event charged with epistemological significance, since the philosopher's represented identity and traits were seen as a symbolic reflection both of French society and of the viewer's own desired personal traits. The visit to Houdon's studio to admire Voltaire's bust may thus be conceptualized as an encounter between Voltaire and the viewer, as if both were visitors at a social salon gathering. Such a conceptualization of this encounter as simulating the dynamics of contemporary cultural and social activity, serves to further elucidate the indexical essence of such portrait busts. It thus comes as no surprise that while this bust of Voltaire was not exhibited in any of the official Salons, it was the most often reproduced version of Houdon's portraits of Voltaire.

The classicizing style that characterizes Houdon's bare-chested bust of Voltaire has been described in the following manner by Ulrike Mathies:

> Like the Romans, he successfully combined a realistic depiction of the idiosyncrasies of a particular face with the idealization of the sitter's spirit and character, thus placing Voltaire on a par with the ancient philosophers and writers.[33]

Indeed, this bust *à l'antique* was designed to forge a connection between the sitter and the ancient philosophers represented in a similar way in classical sculpture. Yet as in the case of Pajou's portrait of Buffon, I would like to suggest that these representational conventions amount to more than a simple neoclassical statement. Significantly, Voltaire's warm smile situates the portrait at a removal from the stern Roman figures represented in classical busts. Houdon,

32   François Métra, *Correspondance secrète, politique et littéraire*, 18 vols. (London, 1787–1790), vol. 6, 164.

33   Mathies in Poulet et al., *Jean Antoine Houdon*, 154.

it seems, meant to draw a more intricate picture, repositioning the virtuous philosopher in a new pantheon of contemporary Great Men whose ideology embodied the period's emphasis on introspection and the search for individualism, simplicity and truth—all epitomized by the face and by the gentle smile. This emphasis on truthfulness resulted in an artistic quest for verisimilitude and naturalism that was often peculiarly complemented by an ideal nude chest rather than contemporary clothing.[34]

One of the most prominent advocates of individuality and truthfulness during this period was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose *Confessions* was one of the first autobiographies in which an individual wrote of his own life mainly in terms of his worldly experiences and personal emotions. Although not published in his lifetime, the *Confessions*, written between 1765 and 1769, were publicly read by Rousseau in leading salons and in various other meeting places. This work, which Rousseau defined as a self-portrait, reflects the period's increasing focus on subjectivity and introspection, opening with the words:

> I have entered upon a performance which is without example, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. I mean to present my fellow-mortals with a man in all the integrity of nature; and this man shall be myself.[35]

Rousseau's literary portrayal emphasizes the importance of sincerity and of honest description, even when the traits described are far from ideal. As he continues to write in Book I, in what amounts to a celebration of sincerity:

> Such as I was, I have declared myself; sometimes vile and despicable, at others, virtuous, generous and sublime; [...] let each in his turn expose with equal sincerity the failings, the wanderings of his heart [...].[36]

Born in Geneva in 1712, Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a philosopher, writer, and composer whose writings exercised a major influence on both the educational

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34   For the aspect of nudity in full-length portraits of philosophers, see Judith Colton, "From Voltaire to Buffon: Further Observations on Nudity, Heroic and Otherwise," in *Art, the Ape of Nature: Studies in Honor of Horst Woldemar Janson*, eds. Moshe Barash and Lucy Freeman Sandler (New York and Englewood Cliffs, 1981), 531–548.

35   Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions of Jean Jacques Rousseau*, trans. S. W. Orson (London, 1903), 8. Available on-line through Project Gutenberg, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3913/3913-h/3913-h.htm, accessed June 15, 2014.

36   Ibid.

and the political discourses of the Enlightenment. Rousseau's accounts of his own life are among the pioneering works of modern autobiography, while his novels, with their emphasis on the importance of emotions, played an important role in the development of literary Romanticism. With its focus on subjectivity and introspection, his *Confessions* became one of the paramount achievements of the Age of Sensibility.[37] Yet Rousseau's social and political works, which won him international fame, also generated bitter controversy. He was known for his troubled personality and for his complex relationships, both with fellow intellectuals and with women. Rousseau died on July 2, 1778, at the age of sixty-six, just one month after Voltaire's death.

Immediately following Rousseau's death, Houdon was asked to make a death mask of the revered philosopher. The sculptor wrote that he:

> [...] received at midnight [...] an express letter from M. de Girardan, who sent it to me, knowing of my admiration for the great man, and his constant refusal during his lifetime to allow his bust to be made [...].[38]

The artist based the three customary versions and all the replicas of Rousseau's portrait on his death mask, which was made one day after the writer's death: the bust *à la Française* (Paris, Musée du Louvre) was exhibited in plaster by Houdon in the Salon of 1779; the draped version *à l'antique* (Paris, Musée du Louvre), meanwhile, portrays the sitter as an ancient philosopher, wearing a toga and a headband. The third bust (fig. 6), which was also executed *à l'antique*, depicts the philosopher with his chest bared, and features a rounded bottom.[39] All three types display an extraordinary liveliness, and are all characterized by intelligent, sensitive eyes. Stanislas de Girardin, the marquis's son, who was well acquainted with Rousseau, praised the painted plaster portrait commissioned by his father, noting that:

> [T]he resemblance [...] is striking, especially when looking at it in profile; a smile of merriment is on his mouth; he is the first artist who makes

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37   I am using the term sensibility (or sensible) throughout this study in the way it is understood with regard to the eighteenth century, as carrying both the concept of reason and that of feeling. See Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London and New York, 1986).

38   From a letter written by Houdon in 1791, quoted in Poulet et al., *Jean Antoine Houdon*, 167.

39   Guilhem Scherf, *Houdon 1741–1828: Statues, portraits sculpé...*, exh. cat. (Paris, 2006), no. 14, 86–89.

a cavity for the eyes and indicates the pupils, which gives his portraits a
feeling of life that is frightening when looking at them a long time.[40]

Rousseau's bare-chested portrait encapsulates the juxtaposition of idealism
and particularity that we can now recognize as a convention in sculptural por-
traits of contemporary philosophers. The allusion to classical iconography and
to the eternal life of ancient philosophers places Rousseau within an ideal and
remote sphere, countering his perception of himself as a unique individual.
At the same time, however, Houdon represented Rousseau's large nose, deep
wrinkles, and sunken cheeks, and his stern gaze is mitigated by a delicate
smile. Together with his bare head, the smile forms a straightforward repre-
sentation of his personality rather than an image of virtue rooted in a glorified

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40   Quoted in Poulet et al., *Jean Antoine Houdon*, 168.

past.[41] In this manner, Houdon created an artistic narrative compatible with Rousseau's literary self-portrait, as well as with the artistic ideal of truthfulness expressed by Diderot. In an era characterized by the rise of the individual and the promotion of sincerity and uniqueness, the evocation of generic, idealized images drawn from antiquity could be seen as anachronistic. The allusion to antiquity and the association with an idealized image of an ancient philosopher seems to stand in contrast to the attempt to portray the unique identity of a contemporary sitter. It places him within a sphere of idealized representations designed to generate a sense of collective identity and French virtue, and ties him to the past and to the ideology of the Roman republic rather than to the contemporary ideas that shaped the individual, naturalistic, and intimate character of the bust's upper part.

Yet was this hybrid form of representation, which captured a unique inner self while evoking an ideal and timeless figure, perceived as conflicted or problematic by eighteenth-century sitters, artists, and viewers? A study of small-scale porcelain portraits of philosophers, which were almost exclusively destined for the domestic and private sphere, reveals the preferences of bourgeois consumers. Such an examination makes clear that in contrast to foreign connoisseurs, who frequently preferred the severe format *à l'antique*, and to royal functionaries who commissioned this format for public spaces and purposes, the version *à la Française* was far more popular among private bourgeois consumers in France. The majority of small-scale porcelain images of French philosophers created after celebrated sculptures and displayed in French domestic interiors featured clothed figures dressed either *à la Française* or with a partly open shirt associated with images of philosophers.

In 1767, the royal porcelain factory in Sèvres produced its first bust of Voltaire (fig. 7).[42] This portrait, which was modeled that same year after a bust by Jean-Claude-François Rosset, represented the sitter as a relatively old man: he appears bare-headed, with a highly naturalistic expression and facial features, and wears a contemporary jacket above a slightly open shirt. This version was especially popular in Paris, and Voltaire himself—who bought at least two

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41   For other aspects and interpretations of realistic artistic depictions of Rousseau, see Douglas Fordham, "Allan Ramsay's Enlightenment: Or, Hume and the Patronizing Portrait," *The Art Bulletin* 88 (2006): 508–524.

42   On this bust, see Jennifer Montagu "Some Lesser-Known Busts of Voltaire," *Connoisseur* 167 (1968): 225–229; Aileen Dawson, *A Catalogue of French Porcelain in the British Museum* (London, 1994), no. 150, 185–186.

FIGURE 7   *After Jean-Claude-François Rosset*, Voltaire, *1767, Sèvres porcelain, h. 19.6 cm* (*including guilt blonze base*)*, London, The British Museum.*
IMAGE: © TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

copies of it—regarded it as the "best bust" made in his image.[43] Around the same time, the royal porcelain factory also produced a portrait bust of Diderot (fig. 8). These portraits marked the emergence of a new fashion centered on busts of contemporary French philosophers. Diderot's bust was created after Marie-Anne Collot's life-size portrait, which was highly praised by the sitter (the terracotta model is in Sèvres, Cité de la céramique).[44] Much like Rosset's image of Voltaire, Collot's bust portrayed Diderot wearing an open shirt and sporting his natural hair, thus emphasizing the ideals of naturalism and

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43   Voltaire's words are quoted in Taylor, "Artists and *Philosophes* as Mirrored by Sèvres and Wedgwood," 30; for Voltaire's purchase, see Svend Eriksen and Geoffrey De Bellaigue, *Sèvres porcelain: Vincennes and Sèvres, 1740–1800* (London, 1987), 109.

44   Marie-Louise Becker, "Le buste de Diderot de Collot à Houdon," *L'Estampille, L'Objet d'art* 412 (2006): 58–63. The attribution of this bust to Collot, which Becker already suggested in an earlier publication, is doubted by Guilhem Scherf in Poulet et al. *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, 151, note 10.

FIGURE 8   *After Marie-Anne Collot,*
Denis Diderot, *c. 1766, porcelain, made*
by Sèvres manufactory, h. 33 cm
(*including base*)*, Paris, Becker Collection.*
IMAGE: © MARTINE BECK COPPOLA

self-revelation. Once again, the choice of contemporary attire attests to a preference for truthfulness and for the immediate present over the ideal and remote aura that characterizes the versions *à l'antique*. Voltaire and Diderot's clothed busts thus exemplify the conventional artistic representation of contemporary philosophers in small-scale images designed for a private clientele.

The preference of private consumers for draped busts over bare-chested ones was also evident in life-size busts; an interesting case in point is the portrait of the philosopher Claude-Adrien Helvétius, which was sculpted by Jean-Jacques Caffieri (fig. 9). This marble bust was executed in 1772, following the philosopher's death in 1771.[45] It was commissioned by Madame Helvétius for private use, and remained in the possession of the family until 1910. Madame Helvétius

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45   André Michel, "Les bustes d'Helvétius et de Malesherbes au Musée du Louvre," *Les Musées de France* 3 (1912): 41–42; Paul Vitry, ed., *Catalogue des sculptures du Moyen Âge, de la*

FIGURE 9   *Jean-Jacques Caffieri,*
Claude-Adrien Helvétius, *1772, marble,*
h. 83 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS /
THIERRY LE MAGE

herself participated in French intellectual life, and her salon, which was active
for a period of over five decades, was attended by leading Enlightenment fig-
ures. Caffieri represented Helvétius using the formula reserved for depicting
philosophers, while taking into consideration the bust's designation for the
private sphere: he modeled a smiling and gentle face, with a soft gaze and a
contemporary tie-wig featuring a large ribbon bow at the back of the philoso-
pher's neck. Helvétius is dressed in a simple and semi-open undershirt, and
wrapped in rich drapery that falls off his right shoulder, enveloping the bust
and replacing the traditional cut at its bottom.

Since this portrait was created for the private sphere, the choice to depict
the sitter *à la française* was a natural one for Caffieri. Yet when the artist offered
the Académie Française his collection of busts of Great Men, which included
portraits created both by him and by other artists, a new version of this bust
had to be created (fig. 10).[46] Designed for the public sphere, the second bust
was expected to convey a different set of Enlightenment ideals, among which

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Renaissance et des Temps moderns, du musée du Louvre, (Paris, 1922), part II: *Temps mod-
erns*, 16, no. 985.

46   On this bust, see Simone Hoog, *Musée national du Château de Versialles. Les sculptures. 1:
Le musée* (Paris, 1993), no. 760, 177.

FIGURE 10 *Jean-Jacques Caffieri*, Claude-Adrien Helvétius, *1772, painted plaster, h. 64 cm, Versailles, Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon.*
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES)

were greatness and an eternal existence; these ideals led to a classicizing image intended to generate and promote a sense of collective virtue that was associated with moral exemplars of the past. Caffieri did not abandon the *à la française* model used for the marble bust commissioned by Madame Helvétius. He did, however, make slight alterations to the new version, the most substantial of which was the exclusion of the rich drapery and the employment of a round cut at the bottom of the bust, as in Roman Republican busts. In this manner, the artist created a hybrid design celebrating contemporaneity, individualism, openness, and naturalism alongside restraint, idealism, and a timeless and collective essence.

My assertion regarding the preference of private consumers for figures in contemporary dress is further supported by the large number of busts reproduced in this style, and made of relatively cheap materials such as plaster. In 1778, following the death of both Voltaire and Rousseau, Houdon seized on the lucrative opportunity of offering the public replicas of his two *à la française* portraits of these figures, which he sold as pendants.[47] One such pair, which

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47   Houdon was not the only one to exploit this commercial opportunity, nor was this an exclusively French phenomenon. The pair of busts 'Voltaire and Rousseau' was

is made of plaster and displayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is characterized by realistic facial features, as well as contemporary clothes and wigs. Both busts were painted to imitate the effect of terracotta—a material more prestigious than plaster—and are the exact same height (67.3 cm), since they were designed to be sold and displayed together. Although many of Houdon's foreign and royal patrons preferred the severe *à l'antique* portrait format, the celebrated sculptor was clearly aware of the fact that the bourgeois clientele favored the *à la française* type.

It is hardly surprising, then, that when Rousseau's close friend, the marquis de Girardin, asked Houdon for a copy of the philosopher's portrait, he requested a bust *à la française*.[48] The marquis—whose son's praise of this bust was quoted above—was himself an artist, as well as a highly cultivated gentleman, and his estate at Ermenonville, where Rousseau had spent the last months of his life, featured "natural" gardens inspired by Rousseau's writings. A painted plaster portrait bust of Rousseau was sent to the marquis on July 5, 1779. Like the Metropolitan copy, this bust by Houdon shows Rousseau wearing a curled short wig and an ornamented coat that partly covers a vest and ruffles. Since portraits of philosophers were seen as symbolically projecting the sitter's qualities onto the bust's owner, the preference for the more accessible type of portrait over the one representing an image of ideal virtue is understandable, for the owner of the bust would have wanted the image of the sitter to resemble him as much as possible. In this regard, it is important to acknowledge the significance of death masks, such as the one used in the case of Rousseau's bust by Houdon: such masks transformed the surface of the bust into a copy of the sitter's actual skin—thus creating the possibility of a tactile experience that places the viewer in direct contact with the sitter. Girardin was so pleased with Houdon's sculpture that he had it depicted alongside his own image in the painted portrait he commissioned from Jean-Baptiste Greuze shortly after acquiring the bust (Châalis, Musée de l'abbaye royale). Greuze depicts Girardin as a man of nature, erudite and fashionably dressed yet tender and smiling, while the gaze of the admired philosopher's bust imparts to the marquis Rousseau's own virtuous nature.[49] Greuze, who was known for his sentimental

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immediately produced and sold all over the Western world. See Taylor, "Artists and *Philosophes* as Mirrored by Sèvres and Wedgwood," 26–27.

48 This bust is the one discussed in Poulet et al., *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, no. 26, 166–170.

49 For the phenomenon of featuring busts in painted portraits, see Ronit Milano, "The Interiorization of Identity: The Portrait Bust and the Politics of Selfhood in Pre-Revolutionary France," in *Designs on Home: The Modern French Interior and Mass Media*,

tendencies, made Houdon's bust appear even more human and accessible in his painting, despite its elevated position on a massive marble pedestal.

The production of *à la française* busts of philosophers was thus enhanced by commercial concerns, and Houdon was arguably the French artist most associated with commercialism. Echoing the pendant busts of Voltaire and Rousseau created in 1778, Houdon followed his bare-chested, *à l'antique* portrait of Buffon, created in 1782 for Catherine the Great, with another, more commercial image of the same sitter wearing a semi-open shirt. This draped bust of Buffon is captured in Louis-Léopold Boilly's painting of Houdon's studio, where it appears fifth from the right between the bust of Sophie Arnould and that of Benjamin Franklin (see Conclusion, fig. 63).[50] Its emphasis on individualism conforms to Buffon's own view concerning self-expression. In his *Discours sur le style*, which he delivered to the members of the Académie Française, Buffon stated that: "Writing well consists of thinking, feeling and expressing well, of clarity of mind, soul and taste [...] The style is the man himself."[51] The *à la française* portrait bust thus constituted, above all, a platform for the dissemination of the new cultural ideals of self-exploration and individual expression. Moreover, the preference expressed by private consumers for representations of simple, individual-looking, approachable figures in contemporary dress led to an avoidance of hybrid combinations of classicizing and contemporary elements in busts destined for the private market.

This hybrid quality, which captures the dualism of Enlightenment ideals regarding individual and collective identity, could have been perceived by the philosophers themselves as an advantage rather than as a source of conflict. The thinkers in question arguably sought to communicate both their admiration for ancient art and ideas and for natural and truthful artistic representations reflective of their own period's greatness. As Diderot wrote in his remarks on the Salon of 1765: "He who neglects nature for the antique risks being cold, lifeless, devoid of those hidden, secret truths that can be seen in nature alone."[52] Nevertheless, his depiction as a philosopher demanded more than the creation of a mere semblance; this perspective is made evident in Diderot's agitated

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1770–1970, eds. Anca I. Lasc, Georgina Downey, and Mark Taylor (London and New York, forthcoming).

50   An 1781 painted terracotta copy of this draped bust of Buffon (h. 61 cm) is in Potsdam, Sanssouci, Skulpturensammlung.

51   Comte de Buffon, *Discours sur le style*, quoted in Otis E. Fellows and Stephen F. Milliken *Buffon* (New York, 1972), 149–154.

52   Denis Diderot in *Oeuvres completes, vol. 14: Salon de 1765*, eds. Bukdahl, Lorenceau and May, 279.

discussion of Michel Van Loo's portrait of him (Paris, Musée du Louvre) in his *Salon of 1767*, which lamented the lack of such a 'secret ingredient' due to the overly spontaneous turn of his head and expression.[53] Modernity, naturalism, and truthfulness, as showcased in Van Loo's portrait of Diderot, thus required a complementary 'ideal air' derived from antiquity in order to situate the portrait within a wider framework. For eighteenth-century thinkers, as this discussion by Diderot reveals, antiquity and modernity were inextricably interwoven with one another. A similar perception is communicated by Voltaire's declaration that: "We have our arts, antiquity has its. We know how to make today a trireme; but we build ships of one hundred cannons."[54]

Voltaire's own views and actions demonstrate his approach towards portraiture and individual identity: When Catherine the Great of Russia commissioned a series of paintings depicting scenes from his life, Voltaire himself decided on their intimate subject matter. One of the most famous paintings in the cycle, which was executed by Voltaire's friend, Jean Huber, represents the great writer getting up in the morning (fig. 11).[55] In shaping the narrative and iconography of this particular painting, Voltaire chose to expose himself during a private moment of the day; half-nude, with his sleeping cap, in a simple, everyday pose. I suggest that in this case, the term *self-exposure* serves not merely to define the literal content of the image, but also bespeaks a cultural ideal that was similarly addressed in the literature of this period: a celebration of individuality and an emphasis on self-examination and self-revelation. This new attention to the practice of self-exploration and exposure led to the flourishing not only of the literary genre of the autobiography, but also of the reading and writing of letters that could potentially be published as 'correspondence,' together with numerous personal and subjective accounts of various kinds.[56] The new ideals of subjectivity and self-exposure were similarly given expression in visual art through a frank, realistic portrayal of facial features

53   Denis Diderot, *Salon of 1767*, XI, in *On Art and Artists: An Anthology of Diderot's Aesthetic Thought*, ed. Jean Seznec, trans. John S.D. Glaus (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London and New York, 2011), 104.

54   Voltaire, "Antiquité," in *Dictionnaire philosophique*, in *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire* (Paris, 1827), vol. 11, 1313.

55   Bernard de Montgolfier, *Le Musée Carnavalet: L'Histoire de Paris illustrée, un aperçu des collections* (Paris, 1986), p. 70; Garry Apgar, *L'Art singulier de Jean Huber: Voir Voltaire* (Paris, 1995).

56   For just a few examples: Michael Mascuch, *Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591–1791* (Stanford, 1996); Robert V. McNamee et al., *From Letter to Publication: Studies on Correspondence and the History of the Book* (Oxford, 2001); Robert H. Bell, *The Rise of Autobiography in the Eighteenth Century* (Lewiston, 2012).

FIGURE 11   *Jean Huber*, Le Lever de Voltaire à Ferney, *c. 1770, oil on canvas, 37 × 31 cm, Paris, Musée Carnavalet.*
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS / AGENCE BULLOZ

and through the use of artistic devices such as physical exposure, including the semi-open shirt used in busts of philosophers.

In literature, ideals of frankness and self-exploration can be recognized in terms of both contents and literary methods. As Diderot wrote in his *Madame de la Carlière*, published in 1772:

It is the effect of sincerity to create an assembly of people united by a single thought and a single soul. [...] People are so good and so happy

when sincerity reunites their voices, brings them together, turns them
into one![57]

In this spirit, Diderot gave his own name, as well as those of other people
from his social circle, to various characters in his novels and dialogues. In *Le
Neveu de Rameau*, written in the 1760s and published in 1772, Diderot presents
an allegedly real dialogue between himself and the nephew of the celebrated
composer Jean-Philippe Rameau. He used a similar technique in his 1776 novel
Entretien d'un philosophe avec la Maréchale de ***, presenting the reader with
an ambiguous figure—neither completely fictional nor entirely real. Although
the dialogue in *Entretien d'un philosophe* unfolds between two figures named
Diderot and La Maréchale, and the dialogue in *Le Neveu de Rameau* is between
protagonists referred to as *"moi"* and *"lui,"* Diderot appears to be a fictional,
idealized depiction of a philosopher—thus constituting a generic image that
the reader can potentially identify with, and which can be associated with a
general idea of a 'self.' The intersection of individual and generic traits in these
novels may, I would like to suggest, be read as a literary parallel to the portrait
bust of Diderot; in both cases, the ideal traits of the represented figure pro-
vide the reader/viewer with an opportunity for self-reflection, thus creating an
open platform for the formulation of French intellectual identity.

   This analogy can be amplified by analyzing another representation of
Diderot: the marble portrait made by Marie-Anne Collot in 1772 (fig. 12).[58]
Collot, who left France to work at the Russian court of Catherine the Great,
created a portrait of the philosopher that employs the formula of a realistic-
looking face, a soft smile, a bare chest, and a round, *à l'antique* cut. Her choice
of this formula reflects the reigning cultural ideology of the Russian court,
which celebrated Enlightenment ideals and French intellectuals. This artis-
tic formula was also employed in portraits of the empress herself, who was
on friendly terms with Diderot. In an earlier bust of her by Collot, from 1769
(St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum), she is portrayed with a semi-
bare chest, a warm smile, realistic features and a natural expression.[59] A veil
exposes her neck and the top of her chest while partly covering her head, which

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57   Denis Diderot, *Madame de la Carlière ou Sur l'inconséquence du jugement public de nos
      actions particulières* (1772), in *Oeuvres de Denis Diderot* (Paris, 1819), vol. 5, part II, 658.

58   On this bust, see Jordana Pomeroy et al., *An Imperial Collection: Women Artists from the
      State Hermitage Museum*, exh. cat. (London, 2003), 204–205.

59   On this bust, see Ibid., 200–201 and 80, fig. 22.

FIGURE 12 *Marie-Anne Collot*, Denis Diderot, *1772, marble, h. 57 cm, St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum.*
IMAGE: © THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM. PHOTO BY VLADIMIR TEREBENIN

is topped by a tiara and an elaborate coiffure. Harnessing the formula usually reserved for philosophers, Collot created a bust that embodies the dualism of individual and generic identities and values, and positions the empress as part of the intellectual elite of her time.

Diderot's portrait by Collot was based on a life mask done by Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne—Collot's affectionate teacher—and sent to Russia, as well as on a plaster cast of Collot's own terracotta bust of Diderot from 1766 (now lost), which belonged to Diderot's friend, Friedrich Melchior Grimm. This portrait, whose expression was repeated in the marble bust, was praised by Diderot in 1767:

> I forget to mention among the good portraits of me the bust by Mademoiselle Collot, especially the last one that belongs to my friend Monsieur Grimm. It is good, it is very good; in his home it has taken the place of another by her master Falconet, which was not good. When

Falconet saw his student's bust he took his hammer and smashed his own in her presence. That was frank and courageous.[60]

Collot represented Diderot without a wig, so that his natural hair is exposed. His features are similarly natural, and his smile conveys sincerity and reflects his inner character. Despite Jean-Antoine Houdon's profound interest in Collot, whose bust of Diderot preceded his own (see fig. 1), the difference between the two portraits is striking: Collot sculpted the smiling face of a familiar man with drooping eyelids, whereas Houdon gave the philosopher the look of a virile thinker with an incisive gaze. Nevertheless, the general formula is similar: a head with short, natural hair depicted above a nude upper torso. The physical exposure of the chest and the hair, enhanced by an unaffected smile, evokes ideals of self-exploration and exposure. Seen together with the examples analyzed above, this portrait offers an alternative to the traditional interpretation of the bare chest motif as a classicizing one—positioning it instead as an allusion to the contemporary idea of self-revelation. So that while these hybrid portraits evoked ancient imagery that endowed the sitter with timeless traits, they simultaneously represented a sincere, individual self. This duality, which was unique to the portrait bust, was facilitated by this medium's three-dimensionality and communicative, performative essence. Such busts thus articulated a particular identity that the viewer could identify with, while also generating an ideal image of collective French identity and situating the beholder in the conceptual sphere of a social gathering.

When appropriated by sculptors for the representation of French artists, this formula endowed them with an opportunity to forge a link between French artists and the philosophic milieu of their time. Diderot himself lamented the loss of this connection, which he recognized as existing in antiquity: "Why is it that the works of the Ancients have such great character? It is because they attended the philosopher's schools."[61] In 1759, at the age of twenty-nine, Augustin Pajou exhibited at the Paris Salon a draped *à l'antique* terracotta bust (Nantes, Musée des Beaux-Arts) of his master, the royal sculptor Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, which was later copied by Pajou as a bare-chested *à l'antique* type (fig. 13). When he created the portrait of his renowned and influential teacher, Pajou had been back from Rome for two years, and was approaching the last stage of his training—his introduction into the Académie Royale. This bust seems to have constituted a personal testimony of the esteem and affection he

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60   Diderot, *Salon of 1767*, in *Diderot on Art*, ed. and trans. John Goodman (New Haven and London, 1995), 21.

61   Diderot, in *On Art and Artists*, ed. Seznec, 140.

FIGURE 13 *Augustin Pajou,*
Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, *1758 (bronze cast*
after Lemoyne's death in 1778), bronze,
h. 48 cm (with base: 62 cm), Paris, Musée du
Louvre.
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS / GÉRARD
BLOT / CHRISTIAN JEAN

felt for Lemoyne as he was about to finally become his colleague. Not coinci-
dentally, this bust of Lemoyne was exhibited at the Salon together with Pajou's
reception piece.

This portrait of Lemoyne was praised and celebrated for several decades, in
the course of which it was widely reproduced and illustrated in anthologies of
eighteenth-century portraiture.[62] Despite the fact that it bears the date 1758 on
its back, this bronze replica was cast in 1789, following the presentation of a
marble version in that year's Salon.[63] Like Pajou's later portrait of Buffon, and
like Houdon's busts of Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau, Pajou's bust portrays
Lemoyne in a naturalistic manner. Terms such as 'resemblance' and 'truth' were
repeatedly applied to this bust by Salon reviewers, while Diderot marveled:

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62   For reproductions and variations, see Draper and Scherf, *Augustin Pajou*, 68.
63   Ibid., no. 27, 70–72; Bückling and Scherf, *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, no. 36, 214–217.

> Oh, such a beautiful bust of Le Moine, my friend, such a beautiful bust!
> He lives, he thinks, he looks, he hears, he is about to speak.[64]

Another critic wrote: "One needs only a glimpse at M. le Moyne to be struck by
the astonishing resemblance."[65] In the *Mercure de France*, Marmontel noted:

> A bust [...] no less astonishing for the truth, the vigor and the fire with
> which it has been modeled. Those who know the genius and soul of M. le
> Moyne cannot see this bust [...] without feeling a sweet emotion.[66]

Lemoyne's head is turned to the side, while his deep-set eyes are directed at
something or someone at his eye level. As Pajou had learned from Lemoyne,
the eyes were a key element in achieving liveliness and movement in sculpted
busts. Pajou did not omit the signs indicating Lemoyne's age, nor did he
attempt to mask his unflattering features—the large forehead, the long nose,
the high cheekbones and sunken cheeks. He is shown wigless, and his metic-
ulously carved natural hair, together with the broad smile, the wrinkles, the
dimples and especially the lively eyes all infuse the portrait with a sense of
movement. His warmly smiling mouth endows him with a simple, real, and
sympathetic expression, which fits with his reputation as a modest, kind,
sociable and widely loved Great Man—described by Marmontel, who saw him
at the famous salon of Madame Geoffrin, as possessing a "witty and soulful
gaze."[67] Lemoyne also received a small circle at his own home. According to
the painter Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun:

> Le Moine was utterly unpretentious; but he had the good taste to gather
> around him a crowd of famous and distinguished men. [...] At these
> meetings [...] everyone laughed and had a good time.[68]

Borrowing the formula usually reserved for philosophers, Pajou's bust of
Lemoyne juxtaposes a realistic and dynamic style with a bare chest and
round cut at the bottom, thus presenting the celebrated sitter as a leading

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64   Denis Diderot, *Essais sur la peinture (1766); Salons de 1759, 1761, 1763*, eds. Gita May and
     Jacques Chouillet (Paris, 1984), 103.

65   *Deloynes Collection*, vol. 7, no. 90, 29.

66   *Mercure de France*, October 1759, 191.

67   Quoted in Louis Réau, *Une dynastie de sculpteurs au XVIIIᵉ siècle: les Lemoyne* (Paris,
     1927), 48.

68   Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, ed. Claudine Herrmann (Paris, 1986), 48–49.

Enlightenment figure. This association conveys a cultural message concerning not only the status of contemporary artists, but also the status of art in general and of sculpture in particular. Leading artists such as Lemoyne belonged to an elite social milieu. They were usually well educated, and attended the leading salons of the period, where they became acquainted with prominent intellectuals. In some instances, close friendships were formed between philosophers and sculptors. The appropriation of this visual formula for the representation of a sculptor thus constitutes an attempt to draw an equation between the contributions of sculpture and philosophy to the Enlightenment project.

The drawing of a parallel between the status of sculpture and that of philosophy, and the correlation between sculpture and ancient ideals, placed this medium in opposition to painting, which was commonly associated with contemporary life and with more popular visual culture. This strategy therefore also touched upon the previously mentioned debate concerning the superiority of either painting or sculpture over the other, as well as upon the 'quarrel' between the ancients and the moderns, which played a prominent part in the aesthetic discourse of eighteenth-century France. Through its association with antiquity, sculpture not only claimed superiority over painting, but also underscored its privileged relationship to ideal beauty and to virtue. In his review of the Salon of 1765, for instance, Diderot attributed to sculpture qualities such as severity, chastity, innocence, and eternity.[69] As Jacqueline Lichtenstein points out, the qualities listed by Diderot are philosophical rather than aesthetic.[70] Taking this argument a step further, Lichtenstein defines the sculptor as a philosopher, recognizing sculpture's significant role in the Enlightenment project.[71] Building on her theoretical thesis, I suggest that the deployment of the *à l'antique* formula in portrait busts of sculptors also served to forge a visual and conceptual link between the sculptor and the milieu of contemporary French philosophers, thus redefining the role of sculptors and of their medium and casting them as *philosophes* engaged in the visual articulation and propagation of contemporary ideals. In the case of Pajou's portrait of Lemoyne, this allusion to the sculptor as a philosopher pertains to both Pajou and to his sitter, himself a celebrated sculptor.

Contemporary French philosophers did not unanimously agree with the implications of such an appropriation. Voltaire, for one, objected to the possibility of an artist being a Great Man:

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69   Denis Diderot, *Salon of 1765*, eds. Bukdahl and Lorenceau, 281–283.

70   Lichtenstein, *The Blind Spot*, 83.

71   Ibid., chapter 2, esp. 72–92.

A great man is harder to define than a great artist. In art, as in other pro-
fessions, the one who has far surpassed his rivals, or who has a reputation
for having surpassed them, is called great, for just one merit, but the great
man must have many merits.[72]

Diderot, by contrast, acknowledged the possibility of an artist being a Great
Man, stating that: "Chardin is not a painter of history, but he is a great man."[73]
The historical role associated with Great Men gained special resonance when
it came to sculptors, since the contemporary perception of antiquity was more
closely associated with sculpture than with painting. The bust came to epit-
ome an individual manifestation of historical greatness.

In 1782, the painter Adélaïde Labille-Guiard painted a portrait of her col-
league and friend Pajou, who was by then an esteemed sculptor, and depicted
him sculpting a bare-chested version of his famous bust of Lemoyne (fig. 14).
This pastel painting was so impressive in terms of its meditative effect that the
painter selected it as her reception piece upon her admission to the Académie
Royale, and exhibited it at the Salon of 1783. As she was about to become a col-
league of her revered masters, she chose to depict Pajou's famous homage to
his own beloved teacher. By presenting this pastel in the Salon alongside four
other portraits of eminent members of the Académie Royale, Labille-Guiard
situated herself as part of the masculine lineage of the French art world. When
Pajou sculpted the bust of his master he was twenty-eight years old, while in
Labille-Guiard's portrait, painted four years after Lemoyne's death, he is fifty-
three. The thirty-three-year-old Labille-Guiard emphasizes and echoes Pajou's
decision, as a young artist, to represent the sitter's head turned to the side.
Alluding to her own touch as a painter, she shows Pajou bring his master to life,
his fingers seeming to caress the bust.

In painting Pajou, it appears that Labille-Guiard had in mind the schema of
the sculptor-philosopher. He is portrayed realistically, with a soft and sincere
facial expression, and his smile echoes that of his sculpted master. Whereas
the sculpted bust of Lemoyne depicts his natural hair, Pajou is portrayed wear-
ing a contemporary wig. Yet this formal choice is tempered by Pajou's unbut-
toned shirt, which partially exposes his chest—an attribute that was also used
in Houdon's draped bust of Buffon and Caffieri's busts of Helvétius. This pastel
was universally praised at the Salon:

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72   Voltaire, "Grand," in *Dictionnaire philosophique* in *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, 1652.

73   Diderot, *On Art and Artists*, ed. Seznec, 130

FIGURE 14   *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, Portrait de Pajou, sculpteur,*
1782, pastel, 71.3 × 58.5 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (MUSÉE DU
LOUVRE) / TONY QUERREC

> But come see the masterpiece among Madame Guiard's portraits. [...]
> how the naked arm, correctly drawn, appears to be in relief and to come
> forth from the canvas.[74]

Pajou's naked arm, which justifiably drew the attention of the reviewer, plays
an important part in the parallel between the sculptor and an Enlightenment
philosopher. While its exposure enhances the idea of self-exposure suggested
by the semi-open shirt, the white, delicate flesh further amplifies Pajou's gen-
tlemanly air. Pajou's arm is an arm that sculpts, exposes, and shapes person-
alities and ideas. Sculpture, and more specifically the sculpting of portraits, as
this painting seems to proclaim, is thus a philosophical act, intertwined with
the period's epistemic preoccupations.

   A consideration of the tension between the generic quality of classiciz-
ing motifs and the celebration of singularity cannot be complete without

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74   Quoted in Draper and Scherf, *Augustin Pajou*, 370.

addressing the issue of reproduction, which flourished during this period. Were the Enlightenment ideals of singularity and authenticity subverted by the numerous reproductions of certain busts—and especially of portraits representing philosophers who propagated this very ideal? The practice of reproduction in eighteenth-century Paris may be well illustrated by an examination of the studio of Jean-Antoine Houdon. In addition to sculpting marble busts, Houdon's studio also manufactured and sold terracotta and plaster reproductions of the originals. Houdon's busts of Rousseau, Diderot, and Voltaire, which were discussed in this chapter, were among the most widely reproduced portraits of this era. Louis-Léopold Boilly's painting of Houdon's studio (see fig. 63) provides an impression of the sculptor's commercial practices and the manner in which the busts were displayed. The sculptural portraits depicted in Boilly's painting represent celebrated figures, and were all reproduced. Especially noticeable is the white marble image of Sophie Arnould, the fourth bust from the right, which was replicated in some fifty copies—all mentioned in Houdon's contract with the sitter.[75] Houdon's studio was by far the most commercially successful studio in Paris at the time; yet the production of copies was not limited to the studio of the artist who had created the original sculpture. Celebrated works by Houdon, Caffieri, Pajou, Boizot and others were copied and sold with or without their permission by lesser artists, so that dozens of copies of each original bust circulated in Parisian middle and upper-class circles.

From our own vantage point in the present, the practice of reproduction can be understood as enhancing the tension between the unique and the generic, since even the most particular physiognomy, once multiplied, attains a generic character. This modern discourse on reproduction, which began in the early twentieth century, is emblematized by Walter Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.[76] Benjamin's claims were widely cited and debated, and came to form the basis of one of the major critical discourses of the last century.[77] During the second half of the twentieth century, additional aspects of reproduction and repetition were analyzed by

75   Guilhem Scherf, "Houdon, Above All Modern Artists," in *Jean Antoine Houdon*, ed. Poulet et al., 22.

76   Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (1936), (Frankfurt, 2003). Published in English as *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J. A. Underwood (London, 2008).

77   For only a couple of recent responses to Benjamin, see: Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Benjamin's Aura," *Critical Inquiry* 34 (2008): 336–375; Blair Ogden, "Benjamin, Wittgenstein, and Philosophical Anthropology: A Reevaluation of the Mimetic Faculty," *Grey Room* 39 (2010): 57–73.

other prominent thinkers and scholars such as Gilles Deleuze, Rosalind Krauss, and Whitney Davis.[78] Nevertheless, a concern with both the practical and the theoretical aspects of replication and its role in the history of art (as well as an interest in the concept of the 'original') can be traced back to the eighteenth century. The following statement, made in 1779 by Josiah Wedgwood, the owner of the Wedgwood porcelain factory, reveals a preoccupation with similar concerns:

> [...] for it is evident, multiplying the copies of fine works in durable materials, must have the same effect upon the arts as the invention of printing has upon the sciences; by these means the principal productions of both kinds will be forever preserved; and most effectively prevent the return of ignorant and barbarous ages.[79]

Wedgwood underscores the important role of reproductive art within the Enlightenment project, acknowledging the agency of art and its centrality to the formation and dissemination of cultural ideas. As Walter Benjamin remarked a century and a half later, in 1936, the practice of reproduction is not only an enlightening force, but is in effect crucial to the circulation of artworks in the private, domestic sphere.[80] Like Wedgewood before him, Benjamin recognized that mass production practices also reproduced cultural or artistic discourses circulating in the public sphere. In eighteenth-century France, the public's familiarity with particular busts owed much to their availability as cheaper plaster or terracotta replicas. Such replicas enabled a wider range of social classes to become consumers of art objects, and thus gave rise to an artistic and cultural discourse relevant to a relatively large public rather than to a restricted elite.[81]

At the same time, one must consider eighteenth-century practices of reproduction in relation to what Benjamin later described as the loss of the artwork's aura—that is, its striking sense of uniqueness and singularity. At first,

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78   Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York, 1994); Rosalind Krauss, "Retaining the Original? The State of the Question," preface to *Retaining the Original: Multiple Originals, Copies, and Reproductions*, ed. Kathleen Preciado (Washington, 1989), 7–11; Whitney Davis, *Replications: Archaeology, Art History, Psychoanalysis* (University Park, 1996).

79   *A Catalogue of cameos, intaglios, medals and bas-reliefs...made by Wedgwood and Bentley...*, (5th edn., London, 1779), republished in *Wedgwood*, ed. Wolf Mankowitz (London, 1966), 253.

80   Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, 12.

81   On the transformation of the field in this respect, see Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven and London, 1985).

this notion seems to further emphasize the status of such reproductions as generic images that stand in contrast to the sitter's sense of individuality. Yet as Benjamin argues, the reproduction enables the beholder to meet the work on his own terms, and thus eliminates the distance between observer and image.[82] In this manner, the bust became a platform for a reflective representational practice that ties together the artist, the sitter and the viewer both as individual members of French society and as participants in the formation of its collective portrait.

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82   Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, 13; Indeed, some scholars actually tie between reproduction and individuality. See William Huntting Howell, "A More Perfect Copy: David Rittenhouse and the Reproduction of Republican Virtue," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 64 (2007): 757–790.

Decent Exposure: Bosoms, Smiles, and Maternal Delight in Female Portraits[1]

What is a woman? Man's first home.
—DENIS DIDEROT[2]

In 1787, Jean-Antoine Houdon exhibited a plaster bust of his young wife at the Paris Salon (fig. 15).[3] This portrait, whose intimate character was heightened by its display in the public sphere, is characterized by two striking and unusual elements: a broad smile that reveals the sitter's teeth, and an extremely low rounded cut at the bottom of the bust, right below the exposed top part of Madame Houdon's bosom. While this bust was generally praised, these two peculiar artistic choices did not draw special attention at the time, and subsequently received no scholarly consideration as a unique combination.

Yet as this chapter argues, the combination of these two motifs—a semi-nude female breast and a gentle smile—constituted a new artistic formula in French portrait busts of women during the second half of the eighteenth century, which was employed to represent the burgeoning cultural ideal of maternal happiness and delight. In what follows, I will contend that the exposure of the bosom—which appears in an unusually exaggerated manner in Madame Houdon's bust—alluded specifically to the practice of breastfeeding, while the happy smile appeared as a related signifier of both the physical pleasure and the maternal delight experienced in the act of nourishing a child. In the preceding chapter, I suggested that the motifs of the smile and the bare chest in the portraits of eighteen-century French philosophers and intellectuals served to present and disseminate the ideals of self-exploration, sincerity, and individualism, which all formed part of a new ideology centered on the pursuit of happiness. From the perspective of gender theory, the appearance of the smile in female busts and its coupling with the physical exposure of the breasts

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1 An article based on this chapter was published in *Sculpture Journal* 21 (2012): 43–56, under the title: "Decent Exposure: Bosoms, Smiles and Maternal Delight in Pre-Revolutionary French Busts." I am grateful to the editors for the permission to reuse the material here.

2 Denis Diderot, *Appendix to the Salon of 1767*, XI, in *Ruines et paysages*, 370–372.

3 Poulet et al., *Jean Antoine Houdon*, no. 17, 133–136; Allard et al., *Citizens and Kings*, no. 137, 260, 341–342.

FIGURE 15   *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, Madame Houdon,
1786, plaster, h. 61.5 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (MUSÉE DU
LOUVRE)/GÉRARD BLOT

may be charged with additional meanings related to the formulation of a new
female identity. Previous studies of the specific busts discussed in this chapter
adopted a formal or iconographic approach that related them, much like the
busts of the male philosophers, to ancient sculpture, without considering their
specific historical context. This chapter aims to contribute not only to a new
reading of the semi-nude breast and smile motifs, but also to a comprehensive
recognition of their special function in the reformulation of feminine identity.

Although I will focus on a limited number of representative examples, the
formula of a smiling female figure with a semi-nude bosom is widely repre-
sented in pre-revolutionary French portrait busts. The creation of such busts
may be associated with a range of different motives and female roles: the bust
of Madame Houdon is an intimate portrait that was designed to display the art-
ist's skill and sensitivity in creating an image which, while publicly displayed
in the context of the Salon, was ultimately destined for the private sphere.
Portraits of the French queen, by contrast, were commissioned to serve as pub-
lic representations, and to be reproduced and disseminated for the purpose of
political propaganda. At the same time, the growing ambiguity of the distinc-
tion between private and public spheres in the eighteenth century enables us
to read both intimate busts such as that of Madame Houdon and official busts
of the queen as carriers of political or social messages.

The bust of Madame Houdon remained in the possession of the Houdon family until it was acquired by the Louvre Museum directly from the artist's descendants. It was exhibited by Houdon in the Salon as "Head of a young girl. In Plaster," and was described in the following review by one of the Salon critics:

> His head of a girl rivals the most graceful work of classical antiquity. Proportions in the features; soft, fluid contours; elasticity of the flesh; a lively, gentle, innocent face—all attract the admiration of the connoisseurs and even astound the ignorant. Stunning whiteness, grace, sensuality, ease in the muscles; this is what is noticeable in the neck and head: the remainder, however, is not above reproach. How irritating that the artist, tired out by the masterpiece that is the head, has placed the nipples a little too low [...]. Perhaps this is the sitter's fault.[4]

Significantly, this critic focused on the bust's formal qualities and on their association with classical sculpture, while viewing the exposed nipples as nothing more than a sign of negligence. Yet this anatomical detail, together with the young woman's dazzling smile and laughing eyes, bespeaks the great intimacy between the sculptor and his sitter, and lends this portrait its private character.

Madame Houdon, born Marie-Ange-Cécile Langlois, came from a well-educated and well-connected Parisian family. Her mother died a month after her birth and she was raised by her adoptive mother, the comtesse de Villegagnon. She was an ardent Anglophile and even translated into French Anne Damer's novel *Belmour* in 1804. Marie-Ange-Cécile married Houdon on July 1, 1786, at the age of twenty one. She regularly handled her husband's accounts and correspondence in various languages, promoting his career as best she could.[5]

In the plaster bust created by Houdon around the time of their marriage, he represented his young bride in a manner that conveys a warm and happy disposition. Her fancifully arranged hair is breezily pulled up by a headband, while rows of beads fall from stray wisps of hair. A broad smile makes a row of teeth clearly visible. The pupils are carved deep into the bowl-shaped irises, creating a vibrant gaze. The sculptor further accentuated the figure's charm through the depiction of her dimples and the sensual curves on the top part of her breasts. Houdon chose to cut the bare-chested bust *à l'antique*, rounding it off right in the middle of his wife's exposed breasts and inviting the viewer to use her or his imagination in order to complete the sensual image. Whereas

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4 *Tarare au sallon de peinture*, in *Deloynes Collection*, vol. 15, no. 377.

5 Helen Clay Frick, "Madame Jean-Antoine Houdon," *The Art Bulletin* 29 (1947): 207.

the round cut and bare chest are motifs commonly affiliated with the classical tradition, in ancient female representations the bared breast carried a distinct meaning, and was most often associated with female victims of physical violence.[6] By contrast, the exposed breasts in Madame Houdon's portrait may be read as an allusion to the sitter's sexual and maternal nature, which is related to contemporary shifts in the perception of femininity and to the significant efforts involved in its redefinition.[7] The absence of an inscription, which reveals that this work was designated for display in the intimate space of the artist's home, is significant, since the repositioning of female identity and the shift in the structure of the family during this time was strongly related to the private sphere.

The eighteenth century gave rise to a new conception of female identity both within the paternal structure of the family and in society at large, alongside a related intellectual discourse that encouraged collaboration and consent between spouses.[8] Science contributed to this discourse in the form of medical texts that defined women as a distinct human species in terms of their reproductive functions and sexuality (qualities that were denied or repressed in earlier times).[9] These biological theories inevitably had social implications: in his groundbreaking treatise *De l'Égalité des deux sexes, discours physique et moral où l'on voit l'importance de se défaire des préjugés*, which was published in Paris in 1673, François Poullain de La Barre argued that the inequality suffered by women had no natural justification, but was rather based on cultural prejudices. During the 1750s, medical treatises such as Edmond Thomas Moreau's *Quaestio medica: An praeter genitalia sexus inter se discrepent?* (*A Medical Question: Whether Apart from Genetalia There is a Difference Between*

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6   Beth Cohen, "Divesting the Female Breast of Clothes in Classical Sculpture," in *Naked Truths: Women, Sexuality and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology*, eds. Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow and Claire L. Lyons (London and New York, 1997), 66–92; Images of nursing mothers adopted an utterly different formula of representation: Larissa Bonfante, "Nursing Mothers in Classical Art," in Ibid., 174–196.

7   The literature on the Western perception of femininity in the eighteenth century is vast. Some key sources are: Dena Goodman, "Women and the Enlightenment," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, eds. Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, Merry E. Wiesner (Boston, 1998), 233–261; Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton, 2001); For relevant primary sources, see Vivien Jones, ed., *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (London and New York, 1990).

8   See, for example, Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Wife* (New York, 2001), 161–174.

9   Here, too, I limit my references to: Thomas W. Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, 1990); Andrew Mangham and Greta Depledge, eds, *The Female Body in Medicine and Literature* (Liverpool, 2011).

the Sexes?, Paris, 1750) began to question the analogous method of anatomical description that takes the male body as a point of reference. Pierre Roussel further sustained this approach in his *Système physique et moral de la femme* (Paris, 1775), and used his physical observations to reach conclusions regarding the nature and role of women more generally. These writings not only affected the social perception of women, but also contributed to the constitution of a physical model of female identity. Within this framework, women's erotic nature and capacity for physical pleasure received legitimization, and were related to new social ideals of motherhood and maternal pleasure. In the realm of visual art, this discourse was given expression in images of nursing mothers charged with a moral message. The erotic significance of the female breast was also extensively communicated through images of sexual women in the midst of an erotic act, which became extremely popular in Paris in the eighteenth century. These two different types of images were engraved and distributed as prints among the upper classes, making manifest the new perception of the physiological constitution of women and their pursuit of both maternal and erotic pleasure.

These accounts gradually paved the way for a vigorous intellectual discourse on gender and society. In 1750, the female writer Madeleine de Puisieux's book *La femme n'est pas inférieure à l'homme* was published in Paris. It was followed by Claude-Adrien Helvétius' *De l'esprit* (1758), which insisted that men and women have an equal disposition for human understanding. A decade later, Dom Philippe-Joseph Caffiaux presented a spirited defense of women in his *Défense du beau sexe*, which was followed by the more moderate position expressed by Voltaire in his *Femmes, soyez soumises à vos maris* (Paris, 1768) and in Diderot's *Sur les femmes* (Paris, 1772). Parallel to Rousseau's publications, which encouraged women to be devoted mothers, women were ascribed an important social role as nurturers of a new generation of French men and women; this role, and the physical constitution of women, became pervasive themes in popular literature and art.[10] This female identity combined both sexual and maternal characteristics, while physical pleasure was often related to the satisfaction gained by women from their maternal role. As André Sabatier wrote in 1766: "A tender and jealous mother rocking her baby—token of her

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10   Carol Duncan, "Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in French Art," *Art Bulletin* 55 (1973): 570–583; Madelyn Gutwirth, *The Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolutionary Era* (New Brunswick, 1992), esp. chapter 1, 3–210; Mary Sheriff, "Fragonard's Erotic Mothers and the Politics of Reproduction," in *Eroticism and the Body Politics*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Baltimore, 1992), 14–40.

fires. [...] It is Venus who charms and caresses Cupid."[11] This mythological metaphor wittily alludes to the triumph of graceful maternity over eroticism. The dual nature of women is thus acknowledged together with a moralizing message: a woman's fulfillment of her motherly role will provide not only maternal delight, but also physical pleasure.

In this context, the female breast constituted a dual visual motif: whereas traditionally it had carried an almost exclusively erotic charge, beginning in the mid-eighteenth century its association with breastfeeding carried an additional and complementary meaning as an attribute of maternity. French artists took an active part in promoting this emerging ideology, and their works functioned as powerful agents in articulating, disseminating, and implementing these ideas.[12] As themes of child rearing and breastfeeding came to occupy an important place in the intellectual and artistic discourse of the time, images of the happy mother, who exposes her breasts while nursing her children, became emblematic of this new ideal of femininity.[13] The formation of this motif emerged alongside the new social ideal of nursing mothers and the related upper-class fashion of nursing one's own children rather than relying on a wet nurse.[14] This dual ideal is evident in Madame Houdon's portrait—one of several busts in which Houdon represented his family, and especially his children. Madame Houdon's bust is exhibited today in the Louvre, where it is flanked by the smaller portrait busts of her daughters—echoing its original placement in the Houdon household next to the portrait of her daughter Sabine.[15] The context in which it was produced and displayed thus contributes

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11   Quoted in Duncan, "Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in French Art," 572.

12   It is worth mentioning in this context Pierre de Beaumarchais's offer—which was taken up by the city of Lyon—to contribute the profits from his *The Marriage of Figaro* to a charity that would enable poor mothers to nurse their own children. See George D. Sussman, *Selling Mother's Milk: The Wet-Nursing Business in France 1715–1914* (Urbana, 1982), 30.

13   To name only a few sources on the popularization of breastfeeding and its artistic context: Valerie A. Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles, and Babies: A History of Infant Feeding* (Edinburgh, 1986); Patricia R. Ivinski et al., *Farewell to the Wet-Nurse: Étienne Aubry and Images of Breast-Feeding in Eighteenth-Century France*, exh. cat. (Williamstown, 1998); Bernadette Fort, "Greuze and the Ideology of Infant Nursing in Eighteenth-Century France," in *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century: Age and Identity*, ed. Anja Müller, (Aldershot and Burlington, 2006), 117–134.

14   Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Breast* (New York, 1998), ties the ideology of the breast to political interests; Ruth Perry similarly suggested that the new ideology was related to contemporary colonialist tendencies: "Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2 (1991): 204–234.

15   Scherf et al., *Tesouros do Louvre*, 156.

FIGURE 16   *Augustin Pajou*, Marie-Adélaïde
Hall, *1775, terracotta, h. 63 cm, New York, The*
Frick Collection.
IMAGE: © THE FRICK COLLECTION,
NEW YORK

to the interpretation of Madame Houdon's portrait as a manifestation of
maternal happiness, and to the association of her bare breasts with the act of
breastfeeding, while her broad smile may be related to the pleasure afforded
her by her maternal constitution and by the fulfillment of her maternal duties.

    A more common variation on this formula of the semi-nude bosom and
smile may be found in the portrait bust of Madame Hall, born Marie-Adélaïde
Gobin, which was carved by Augustin Pajou in 1775 (fig. 16).[16] Marie-Adélaïde,
the wife of the painter Peter Adolf Hall, wears an elaborate coiffure, and the
subtle, gentle smile on her face is accentuated by the braided hair falling on her
bare right shoulder. A similarly graceful depiction of the sitter is typical of the
majority of female busts created during this period. These busts all stand out in
contrast to the severe and dramatic quality characteristic of earlier depictions
of women, such as Antoine Coysevox's bust of *Marie Serre, Mother of Hyacinthe*
Rigaud, which was created in 1706 (Paris, Musée du Louvre). Marie Serre's
age, which is revealed by the wrinkles on her face, is meant to evoke respect,
while her stern expression—a motif drawn from Italian Baroque busts—was a

16   John Pope-Hennessy, Terence William Ivan Hodgkinson and Anthony F. Radcliffe, eds.,
      The Frick Collection: An Illustrated Catalogue, vol. IV: *Sculpture: German, Netherlandish,*
      French and British (New York and Princeton, 1970), 110–112.

FIGURE 17   *Peter Adolf Hall,* The Painter's Daughter,
Adélaïde-Victorine, *c. 1785, ivory miniature,*
10.7 × 9.1 cm, London, Wallace Collection.
IMAGE: © BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE
TRUSTEES OF THE WALLACE COLLECTION

conventional motif in representations of women. Another bust created at the
turn of the seventeenth century by François Girardon, *Marie-Thérèse, Reine de
France* (Troyes, Musée d'art d'archéologie et de sciences naturelles), portrays
the wife of Louis XIV as a rigorous figure with an elevated head that conveys
pride and supremacy. Her strict facial expression, and above all the tight lips,
reinforces the desired message of a remote and untouchable queen. The metic-
ulous dress and the grandeur of her mantle point to her royal status. When
compared with the austere and stiff representations of female figures in such
earlier busts, the relative softness, tranquility, and sensuality in representations
of women created from the mid-eighteenth century onwards is clearly evident.

Returning to Pajou's portrait of Madame Hall, one can now clearly recog-
nize the defining characteristics of this recurring formula—both in compari-
son to earlier female busts and to the unusual bust of Madame Houdon. Pajou
designed a draped bust that ends at the waistline. The drapery, however, reveals
no less than what it conceals: the shoulders are completely exposed, while the
garment on the right side of the body falls in folds under the armpit, expos-

ing the upper part of the breast in a sensual manner. The correlation I point
to between the exposed breast and the new ideal of feminine identity might
be further substantiated by Peter Adolf Hall's portrayal of his own daughter
(fig. 17). In this ivory miniature, exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1785, Hall painted
his thirteen-year-old daughter, Adélaïde-Victorine, wearing a deep décolle-
tage that exposes the upper part of her breasts. The nipples are visible, and
the right one is pointed towards the beholder. Her eyes, which are similarly
directed at the viewer, betray a sentimental mood, and a soft smile to com-
plete the formula of maternal delight. The roses that adorn her hair and dress
emblemize her virtuous nature. In light of this painted portrait, Pajou's por-
trait bust of Madame Hall, which was created eleven years earlier, can be read
as a manifestation of contemporary female identity: the semi-exposure of her
breast—allegedly used to nurse little Adélaïde-Victorine who was then just
two years old—is echoed in the revealing portrayal of the daughter as a young
woman.

Significantly, these depictions of exposed breasts in portraits stripped of
an allegorical context were created by men who were extremely close to the
sitters: Madame Houdon's sculpted breasts were portrayed by her young hus-
band, while Adélaïde-Victorine's exposed nipples were painted by her father.
One could claim that the display of these works in the Salon without any refer-
ence to the identity of the sitters was due to their 'inappropriate' erotic nature.
It has been suggested, for instance, that Hall's portrait was inspired by the erot-
icizing image of a woman with her left breast and nipple exposed in Greuze's
La cruche cassée (Paris, Musée du Louvre).[17] Yet whereas the latter work is a
genre painting centered on a moral issue—namely, the loss of virginity—and
portrays a disordered and forlorn figure, Mademoiselle Hall and Madame
Houdon appear respectable and cheerful. As for the omission of their identity
when exhibited in the Salon, it must be remembered that both the plaster bust
and the painted miniature were extremely private portraits. Their designation
for the private sphere further suggests a familial rather than an erotic focus,
and a use of the exposed breast and overt smile to touch upon the themes of
maternity, nourishment, exemplary wifehood, and familial happiness.

Pajou's design of Madame Hall's bust might have been inspired by an earlier
work by the same artist that portrayed Madame du Barry, Louis XV's mistress,
and which was exhibited in the Salon of 1773 (fig. 18).[18] This earlier image fea-
tures a similarly draped torso with bare shoulders, an exposed upper chest,

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17   Stephen Duffy and Christoph Martin Vogtherr, *Miniatures in the Wallace Collection*
      (London, 2010), no. 22, 72–73.
18   This bust had been mentioned too many times to list here. For a thorough discussion see
      Draper and Scherf, *Augustin Pajou*, no. 98, 240–246.

and a sensual air, which is enhanced by the strap extending across the torso
and clinging to the breast. Pajou's earlier terracotta version of the bust of du
Barry, which was made in 1770 as a model for reproduction in porcelain (see
a copy in Versailles, Musée Lambinet), included not only an exposed breast
but also a more clearly articulated smile. The choice of this bust as a source of
inspiration is hardly surprising, since this marble portrait of Madame du Barry
was universally acclaimed as a masterpiece in the reviews of the Salon of 1773.
According to Louis Petit de Bachaumont:

> There is nothing so beautiful as this bust, unique in its authenticity,
> charm, and expression. It strikes even the most inept viewers with the
> air of sensuality that infuses the face; the gaze and posture support
> the sculptor's intentions. No one seeing this celestial figure can fail to
> recognize the rank it occupies nor fail to cry out with M. de Voltaire:
> The Original was made for the Gods.[19]

The famous critic and journalist Friedrich Melchior Grimm also exalted
the portrait:

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19   Louis Petit de Bachaumont, *Les Salons de Bachaumont*, ed. Fabrice Faré (Nogent-Le-Roi,
1995), letter III, 43–44.

> This piece is perhaps M. Pajou's masterpiece; and I know few works by
> our modern sculptors with happier execution, more precious finish.
> Enthusiasm for a charming model seems to have elevated the artist's
> imagination to a perfection of ideal beauty in which, while barely alter-
> ing nature, he has managed to bring to the purity of Greek forms the
> piquant air of French grace with the most gentle and voluptuous
> expression.[20]

Madame du Barry herself, who was a rather difficult client and had already
rejected a previous bust of her made by Pajou, was so pleased with this bust
that she asked for it to be reproduced in porcelain.

In this portrait, the face is slightly turned to the left so that we can admire
the whimsical yet ceremonial hairstyle, which was extremely important to the
countess, and was in fact the reason for her disapproval of the earlier version.
The garment is not a reproduction of court dress or of contemporary clothing;
rather, it is a cloth thrown freely over the body and held by a ribbon across
the shoulder. This ribbon, which invokes the imagery of ancient mythology,
endowed the bust with an allegorical charge related to the sitter's role in Louis
XV's court: Madame du Barry was seen by her contemporaries as Hebe, restor-
ing youth to the aging monarch. Yet despite its air of antiquity, her 'tunic' calls
to mind an alluring negligee, which leaves the beautiful and sensual neck and
bosom of the comtesse du Barry exposed. Her coquetry is enhanced by the
exuberance of the drapery and the movement of the creases around the rib-
bon. And since more specific attributes of Hebe are missing, it seems more
productive to examine the bust in the context of other similar employments
of such garb.

Pajou's celebrated image of Madame du Barry also inspired Jean-Antoine
Houdon's 1775 portrait of Madame His, born Marie-Anne de Vatre (New York,
The Frick Collection). She was a friend of Mademoiselle Langlois—the future
Madame Houdon—and was probably responsible for her marriage to Houdon.
Mademoiselle de Vatre married the Parisian banker François-Pierre His, a
prominent member of the financial bourgeoisie. This bust features elements
very similar to the ones in Pajou's bust of Madame Hall, which resonate with
the formula of the semi-nude breast and the gentle smile. Like the attire worn
by du Barry and Hall, the costume worn by Madame His seems to have been
inspired by classical drapery. Yet rather than alluding to conventional repre-
sentations of Venus or Hebe, her appearance may be associated with depic-
tions of Diana the Huntress. Allegorical representations of women in the guise

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20   Grimm, *Correspondence littéraire*, vol. 10, 380.

FIGURE 19   *Augustin Pajou*, Élisabeth Vigée-
Lebrun, *1783, terracotta, h. 70 cm, Paris, Musée du
Louvre.*
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (MUSÉE DU
LOUVRE)/RENÉ-GABRIEL OJÉDA

of the goddess Diana were a popular traditional choice designed to portray the
sitter as a strong and victorious woman. As Donald Posner has shown, such
representations diminished in scope during the second half of the eighteenth
century, when the *portrait déguisé* came to be seen as a foolish conceit and as a
subversion of the documentary purpose of portraiture.[21] Nevertheless, when a
female bust was designed for public display, nudity was many times "wrapped
up" in an allegorical allusion. In this historical context, moreover, the victori-
ous image of Diana—a woman equal to men—came to be viewed not merely
as a classicizing motif, but as a reflection of the reshaping of female identity
and of the new and important functions assumed by women.

The relationship of this motif to a new notion of maternal delight is fur-
ther clarified through an examination of Pajou's terracotta bust of the painter
Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, which was created in 1783 (fig. 19).[22] In this case, the
mythological evocation of Diana and its traditional association with female
strength and independence acquires special significance: 1783 was a trium-
phant year for the twenty-eight-year-old Vigée-Lebrun, who was accepted as

21   Donald Posner, "The 'Duchesse de Velours' and Her Daughter: A Masterpiece by Nattier
      and Its Historical Context," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 31 (1996): 134.

22   Draper and Scherf, *Augustin Pajou*, no. 104, 254–257.

a member of the Académie Royale. Pajou's bust was sculpted upon her return from a trip to Flanders, where her admiration for Rubens led to the creation of a superb self-portrait in which she wears a straw hat and holds a palette (private collection).[23] This painting, which portrays a woman sure of her talents, was displayed by Vigee-Lebrun in the Salon of 1783, the year of her reception to the Académie Royale; exhibited alongside the bust by Pajou, it appeared as a determined form of self-affirmation.

Pajou's terracotta portrait was well received at the Salon of 1783. The *Mercure de France* praised the "charming and lifelike bust";[24] the *Année littéraire* declared it to possess "great authenticity."[25] The marble version, which was exhibited in the Salon of 1785 and is now lost, garnered similar praise. The *Mercure de France* was enthusiastic: "the resemblance is striking, and the physiognomy full of warmth, expression, and kindness";[26] so was the *Journal de Paris*, which found "much delicacy" in the bust.[27] The *Réflexions impartiales sur les progress de l'art en France* declared it to be a "very graceful head,"[28] while the critic for the *Journal general de France* was more poetic: "[Pajou's] portraits are handsome, although his forms are a bit round. The one of Madame Lebrun, nonetheless, breathes with all the spirit of its model."[29]

This subtly refined bust is both sensual and seductive; the smile and dreamy gaze are accompanied by a ribbon that bunches and crumples the fabric in her décolletage, while stretching tautly across the breasts in a manner that emphasizes the sitter's protruding nipples. This simplicity, Vigée-Lebrun's kind expression, and her representation as a maternal figure are similarly typical of her self-portraits and writings. In her *Souvernirs*, Vigée-Lebrun even went as far as drawing a parallel between motherhood and the creative process of artmaking.[30] In a self-portrait with her daughter Julie, painted in 1786 (fig. 20), the warm and intimate hug that presses the child to her mother's right breast is complemented by a wide smile that reveals her teeth, much like the smile in Houdon's portrait of his wife. Vigée-Lebrun leans her head towards Julie, and smiles as she looks straight at the viewer, as if sharing the happiness bestowed

23   A signed replica is in London, The National Gallery.

24   *Mercure de France*, 20 September 1783, 133.

25   *Année littéraire*, letter XVI, quoted in Draper and Scherf, *Augustin Pajou*, 256.

26   *Mercure de France*, 1 October 1785, 38–39.

27   *Journal de Paris*, in *Deloynes Collection*, vol. 14, no. 351, 844.

28   *Deloynes Collection*, vol. 14, no. 331, 33.

29   Ibid., vol. 14, no. 339, 28.

30   Quoted in Mary D. Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago, 1996), 42.

FIGURE 20   *Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun*, Madame Vigée-Lebrun
et sa fille, Jeanne-Lucie, dite Julie, *1786, oil on
wood, 105 × 84 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.*
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (MUSÉE DU
LOUVRE) / FRANCK RAUX

upon her by her maternal role. The motif of the exposed breast, in this case, is omitted and substituted for by the actual presence of the woman's offspring. In Pajou's portrait bust, which focuses exclusively on Vigée-Lebrun, the absence of a child is compensated for by the semi-exposed left breast and warm smile, which effectively evoke the same themes of breastfeeding and maternal delight. Both works bespeak a quest for simplicity, which is expressed by means of the loose and unaffected attire and the informal treatment of the sitter's hair.

The artistic formula of a semi-nude breast and a smile thus clearly corresponds to the new interest in the sexual constitution of women, and to their dual perception as both erotic and maternal. As Marilyn Yalom has noted, "The breasts that had been separated during the Renaissance into two groups—one for nursing, the other for sexual gratification, were now reunited into one multipurpose bosom. Lactating breasts had become sexy."[31] Interestingly, some

31   Yalom, *A History of the Breast*, 120.

painted portraits of women similarly make use of the largely sculptural motif of the exposed breast, preferring it to the inclusion of actual children in the composition. This formula is clearly employed, for instance, in a miniature portrait of *Madame Mitoire et ses enfants*, created in 1783 by Adélaïde Labille-Guiard (Paris, Musée du Louvre). In this image, Madame Mitoire's social identity is portrayed as conforming to this new feminine ideal, which is conveyed by means of her smile and the exposed bosom presented during the act of breastfeeding. Since she is absorbed in the act of nursing and caring for her children, the smile may clearly be read as a symbol of maternal delight. The flowers woven into the sitter's elaborate hairdo underscore the natural essence of nursing and her constitution as a natural woman.

Jean-Marc Nattier was one of the pioneering painters who employed this representational paradigm as a manifestation of the new feminine ideal, and his 1749 portrait of *Madame Marsollier and Her Daughter* (fig. 21), which was exhibited at the Salon in 1750, may be reread in the context of this contemporary

FIGURE 21 *Jean-Marc Nattier,* Madame Marsollier and Her Daughter, *1749, oil on canvas, 146.1 × 114.3 cm, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.*
IMAGE: © THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

ideology. Madame Marsollier, the daughter of a minor functionary at the French court, had married beneath her station, wedding a wealthy Parisian textile merchant who later bought her a nobility title. As part of her efforts to bolster her social status, this ambitious bourgeois sitter employed Nattier, who was at the time the preeminent painter of the royal family. This portrait displays the luxury fabrics that were the source of the family's fortune, as well as an elegant mirror and several caskets for toiletry articles. The depicted location enhances the intimate and maternal quality of this portrait: the dressing table represents a feminine domestic space, where mothers and their daughters appeared in their most private and intimate state to prepare for making a public appearance. Madame Marsollier, who was known for her beauty and social ambition, is dressed as if in a negligee, with her right shoulder exposed; her right nipple, which protrudes through the fabric, is aimed at the viewer, while her exposed left breast is turned towards her daughter and depicted at the same height as the daughter's head—alluding to the act of nursing. Like the sitters discussed above, Madame Marsollier smiles to convey her maternal delight and constitution as an ideal woman. In her left hand she holds a feather which she uses to caress her daughter's head, while her right hand serves her a bouquet of flowers that further emphasizes the natural essence of motherhood.

Why, then, did the portrait busts created during this period refrain from depicting the explicit act of breastfeeding, while painted portraits created during the same years commonly feature a smiling mother nursing her child? Whereas the overt act of nursing was employed in sculptural genre scenes as well as in religious compositions depicting the Virgin and Child, sculptural portraits excluded such explicit depictions. In contrast to painting, sculpture was perceived as a more solemn and official medium, thus requiring a more implicit formula for the depiction of this theme; the relatively high price of carved or modeled portraits, moreover, led to their association with the upper classes, and therefore called for the use of representational conventions that would be perceived as respectable and elegant; finally, in contrast to allegorical busts, portrait busts were designed—with rare exceptions—to represent a single figure. The exclusion of the female sitter's child from the composition thus required an implicit formula for the evocation of breastfeeding. When nursing was incorporated into large sculpted portraits designed for the public sphere, whose scale allowed for the inclusion of children, this act was placed in an allegorical context. Such was the case, for instance, in Jean-Baptiste Pigalle's *L'Amour embrassant l'Amitié*, commissioned by Madame de Pompadour in 1758 (Paris, Musée du Louvre), or in the case of Pajou's *Allegorie de la reine Marie Leszczynska*, which was executed in 1771 (Paris, Musée du Louvre).

It should be noted that the combined motifs of the smile and nude breast did exist in earlier painted and sculpted images of female figures, in which

they carried an utterly different message. These earlier images, which represented generic women rather than identified sitters, were commonly associated with prostitution.[32] Popular in Europe during the seventeenth century, such portrayals of a broad smile, exposed teeth, and bare breasts alluded to sexual behavior and were associated with a moralizing message. One example of this earlier type of genre imagery is Giuseppe Piamontini's four busts of laughing young women with nude breasts, which was commissioned in 1689 by Prince Ferdinando de Medici (Florence, Palazzo Pitti). The connection between female laughter and prostitution alluded to in these images is echoed by the remarks made by Jean-Baptiste de La Salle in his 1703 essay on the rules of propriety:

> There are some people who raise their upper lip so high, or let the lower lip sag so much, that their teeth are almost entirely visible. This is entirely contrary to decorum, which forbids you to allow your teeth to be uncovered, since nature gave us lips to conceal them.[33]

This iconography, however, was entirely unrelated to the French formula used during the second half of the eighteenth century, where a semi-nude breast and an elegant smile were employed in portraits of respectable female subjects. This new secular formula was similarly distinguished from traditional Christian images of the Virgin smiling while breastfeeding the Christ child.[34] And while it did have earlier precedents, such as, for instance, François Dieussart's 1647 portrait bust of the English princess Henrietta-Maria Stuart (Potsdam, Sanssouci Park), this paradigm did not gain prominence until the middle of the eighteenth century.

From the perspective of gender theory, one may note how the pursuit of happiness was related, in this context, to the celebration of woman's maternal role within a newly reformulated conception of the family and of society as a whole: during the second half of the eighteenth century women gained centrality within the home as educators responsible for raising the future

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32   In relation to the association of such images with prostitutes, it is interesting to consider Colin Jones's claim that the female-celebrities' hybrid identity—of an actress, a courtesan and a prostitute—constituted a proto-feminist concept at the time of the French Revolution. See Jones's "French Crossings IV: Vagaries of Passion and Power in Enlightenment Paris," *Transactions of the RHS* 23 (2013): 3–35. I am grateful to Colin Jones for bringing this article to my attention.

33   Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, ed., Gregory Wright, trans. Richard Arnandez (Romeoville, 1990), 25.

34   Margaret R. Miles, *A Complex Delight: The Secularization of the Breast, 1350–1750* (Berkeley, 2008).

generation. Despite the perseverance of a patriarchal family structure, ideas of conjugal companionship and consent were widely promoted, and the concept of the 'home' acquired a feminine character. New voices called to abandon marriages of interest, and to promote the concept of a loving conjugal relationship based on mutual respect and consent between men and women,[35] and were given expression in both art and literature.[36] In a poem written in 1772, Claude-Adrien Helvétius praised the idea of love in marriage:

> Enchained to both Hymen and Cupid, Happy loving couple, what a blessing is ours [...]. I was scorched by Cupid who was consuming my soul; Hymen, far from quenching the flames, fanned them up.[37]

Hymen, the God of marriage, was associated in the second half of the eighteenth century with Cupid, the god of erotic love. When the two enter into a relationship, happiness—which is the ultimate aspiration—is achieved. The Enlightenment cult of sensibility resulted in a redesigned family image which embodied new and comprehensive ideals of child rearing, and included a more intimate relationship, not only between husbands and wives, but also between parents and children. The figure of the mother played a central role in this new family ideology, and maternal happiness came to emblematize a prosperous family life—indicating the success of the father and husband as the head of the family. In visual portrayals of women, however, where I suggest the smile emblematized maternal delight, the simultaneous association of the female smile with seduction and physical pleasure reflects a tension between the maternal and the erotic that is intrinsic to the eighteenth-century discourse on gender.[38]

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35   For only a couple of sources on the shift in the perception and practices of marriage, see: Maurice Daumas, *Le Mariage amoureux: histoire du lien conjugal sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 2004); Christine Roulston, *Narrating Marriage in Eighteenth-Century England and France* (Farnham and Burlington, 2010).

36   Richard Rand and Juliette M. Bianco, eds., *Intimate Encounters: Love and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century France*, exh. cat. (Hanover and Princeton, N.J., 1997); Philip Conisbee, ed., *French Genre Painting in the Eighteenth Century* (Washington and New Haven, 2007); Martin Postle, "The Family Portrait," in *Citizens and* Kings, ed. Allard et al., 180–185.

37   Quoted in Duncan, "Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in French Art," 579.

38   Susan Weisskopf Contratto, "Maternal Sexuality and Asexual Motherhood," in *Women: Sex and Sexuality*, eds. Catherine R. Stimpson and Ethel Spector Person (Chicago, 1980), 224–240; Élisabeth Badinter, *Émilie, Émilie: l'ambition feminine au XVIIIᵉ siècle* (Paris, 1983); Lesley H. Walker, *A Mother's Love: Crafting Feminine Virtue in Enlightenment France* (Lewisburg, 2008) esp. chapter 4, 95–133.

The powerful image of the maternal woman, known as 'the good wife and mother', is usually associated with the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and more specifically with his *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (published in 1761) and *Émile, ou De l'éducation* (published in 1762)—which significantly contributed to the formulation of this new feminine ideal. Some scholars argue that Rousseau's impact on the growing popularity of breastfeeding is overrated.[39] Yet an examination of contemporary images of the philosopher makes it reasonable to assume that Rousseau's contribution was much appreciated during the eighteenth century, as can be inferred by Augustin Legrand's engraving *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* or *The Man of Nature* (fig. 22). Rousseau is displayed in a rural setting, standing beside a lamb suckling milk from its mother's udders. In this engraving, which was created after Rousseau's death, the philosopher, who had become the symbol of natural behavior, offers a bouquet of flowers to a peasant woman seated beneath an apple tree as she breastfeeds her baby, while her older child points towards Rousseau. The philosopher's gesture leads the viewer's gaze to the breastfeeding mother, indicating the importance of her act. The analogy between the ewe nursing her lamb and the mother nursing her baby alludes to the natural quality of this act. Since physical exposure, truth, and naturalism were interlinked during this period, the nursing mother's bare chest (much like the bare chest *à l'antique* in the busts of the philosophers discussed in Chapter 1) can be construed as conveying ideals of sincerity and natural conduct that were part of the contemporary intellectual discourse.[40] The mother's gaze in this engraving, together with the hand gesture of her older child, creates a circular composition that places the philosopher at its center, thus tying together intellectualism, naturalism, and feminine identity. Indeed, the original caption of the engraving reads: "Il rendit les mères à leurs devoirs et les enfants au bonheur" ("He restored women to their duties and children to happiness").

Since the female busts discussed thus far, excluding the bust of Madame du Barry, all represent women affiliated with the French bourgeoisie—the social milieu in which the new definition of female identity was formulated—one would expect them to represent a more innovative approach than that shaping the representation of women at the royal court. Indeed, Pajou's portrait of

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39   See, for example, Marie-France Morel, "Théorie et pratique de l'allaitement en France au XVIIIᵉ siècle," *Annales de Démographie Historique* (1976): 393–427.

40   On these links in a feminine context, see Mary D. Sheriff, "The Naked Truth? The Allegorical Frontispiece and Woman's Ambition in Eighteenth Century France," in *Early Modern Visual Allegory: Embodying Meaning*, eds. Cristelle L. Baskins and Lisa Rosenthal (Aldershot and Berlington, 2007), 243–264.

FIGURE 22   *Augustin Legrand*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau ou
              l'Homme de la Nature, *c. 1790, etching, 43.8 ×*
              35.4 cm, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.
              WORK IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Madame du Barry, who lived at Versailles, clearly portrays a different approach
than that taken in the portrait of Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun: the portrait of
Madame du Barry is that of an empowered goddess, conscious of the power of
her beauty; the one of Madame Vigée-Lebrun is gentler, and her expression is
characterized by a slight smile and a dreamy gaze. As the dealer René Gimpel
noted in his journal a century and a half later, in 1919, Vigée-Lebrun's bust was
"more beautiful than the Du Barry. […] less authoritarian but more spirited,
less Versailles, more Paris."[41] As the analogy between these examples implies,
the association with classical iconography disappeared entirely in the work
of artists living at a removal from both Paris and Versailles, leaving us with a
seminude bosom that requires reinterpretation. Such is the case, for instance,

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41   René Gimpel, on 17 December 1919, in *Diary of an Art Dealer*, trans. John Rosenberg
      (London, 1966).

FIGURE 23   *Claude Attiret*, Portrait de femme, *1781, marble, h. 71 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.*
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (MUSÉE DU LOUVRE)

in the portrait created in 1781 by Claude Attiret, who left Paris for Dijon five years earlier, in 1776. This sculpted bust of an unidentified *haute-bourgeoise* woman from Dijon (fig. 23) clearly departs from the ideal of classical beauty.[42] This sitter appears graceful and sensual, yet her round face and double chin imply that she is no longer young. Her coiffure is elaborate, with ringlets sensually cascading down her bare neck and right shoulder. The fabric enveloping the bust partly covers a loose dress with a lace border, which reveals the right shoulder and rests on the right nipple. Her warm smile completes the formula of the semi-nude breast, which is clearly associated with the contemporary perception of French femininity rather than with a classical ideal.

Although these new ideals of femininity emerged within the bourgeois sphere, their widespread dissemination in a range of media, including popular literature, fine art, prints, plays, private letters, and philosophical essays, also exerted an influence on the culture of the royal court. One fascinating court portrait that bespeaks the assimilation of the new feminine ideal is the smiling

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42   Paul Vitry, "Un buste d'Attiret," *Bulletin des musées de France* 2 (1931): 23–25.

FIGURE 24 *Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne,*
Madame Victoire, *1775, marble,*
h. 68 cm, whereabouts unknown.
IMAGE: GRAY, PHOTOGRAPHER,
39 W. 67TH ST, NEW YORK

bust of Madame Victoire, Princess of France, carved by Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne
in 1775 (fig. 24).[43] Madame Victoire was forty-two years old when she sat for
Lemoyne. Despite the fact that her father, Louis XV, mockingly referred to her
as "sow," due to her slightly overweight figure, she was widely known for her
beauty, as well as for her piety. Lemoyne chose to portray the princess as a
young, lively, dimpled and smiling woman. Since her feminine identity seems
to have been the primary incentive for the creation of this work, it contains no
religious or conservative attributes. The narrative and iconography of this bust
complies with the ideal of femininity prevalent during the second half of the
eighteenth century. In addition to the smile, Madame Victoire wears a low-out
robe which reveals her neck and right shoulder, while a garland of roses and
other flowers surrounds her shoulders and extends downwards to form a cor-
sage. As was the case in the other busts discussed above, her robe is arranged
to reveal her armpit and expose the upper part of her right breast.

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43   On this portrait, see Réau, *Une dynastie de sculpteurs au XVIIIᵉ siècle*, 88, 146, 155–156.

As Guilhem Scherf has noted, the exposed breast was introduced as a stylistic motif by Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne in the 1760s, and subsequently became a convention of court portrait sculpture.[44] As I argue in this chapter, however, this motif was not merely a stylistic novelty, and was also charged with important social and political ideals shaped by the contemporary discourse on femininity. The fact that the princess was unmarried and had no children did not preclude her portrayal as a sensual, maternal figure. The diffusion of this gender ideology in the context of court life, moreover, was charged with a political significance: considering the newly drawn correlation between the domestic and the public spheres—which was expressed, for instance, in Rousseau's call to perceive the family as a model for political societies—adherence to the new family values amounted to a political statement of solidarity with, and loyalty to, the nation.[45] Female portrait busts celebrating family values and domestic happiness were viewed, in the context of the royal court, not solely as actual representations of motherhood, but also as political messages of dedication to the nation that suited the desired image of the nobility.

From this perspective, one might reconsider the conventional interpretation of Jean-Baptist Pigalle's bust of the famous marquise de Pompadour, Louis XV's mistress, which was completed in 1751 (fig. 25).[46] The bust was commissioned from Pigalle by the marquise herself, and was probably intended for display in her residence, Château de Bellevue. Pigalle had studied under Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, who was famous for his warm, vivacious portraits. He then further pursued his studies in Rome (1736–1739), was admitted into the Académie Royale in 1744, and rapidly went on to become the most successful French sculptor of his period. This was Pigalle's first commissioned portrait, and it is more restrained than his later naturalistic busts. Pompadour's portrait, furthermore, constituted the first large-size sculpture made of French marble: Madame de Pompadour's uncle, Charles-François Lenormant de Tournehem, who had been the director of the *Bâtiments du Roi* since 1746, decided to try and look for a quarry of white marble on French soil. The first block was the piece delivered to Pigalle on February 2, 1749, for his bust of Madame de Pompadour. The earliest mention of Pigalle's portrait of Pompadour occurred in Abbé Raynal's *Nouvelles Littéraires*, on September 7, 1750: "Pigalle is very

44   Scherf in Allard et al., *Citizens and Kings*, 399.

45   Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract, Or Principles of Political Right* (1762), trans. G. D. H. Cole (Whitefish, 2004), book I:2, 2.

46   Ian Wardropper, ed., *European Sculpture, 1400–1900: In the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York and New Haven, 2011), no. 60, 174–177. See full bibliography therein.

FIGURE 25   *Jean-Baptiste Pigalle*, Madame
de Pompadour, *1748–51, marble, h. 75.9 cm,
New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.*
IMAGE: © THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
OF ART

good. […] Right now he is working on a bust of Madame de Pompadour." And
five months later, on 21 January, 1751:

> Pigalle, […] has just finished a bust of Madame de Pompadour. Its design
> is not perfect, but the head is admirable and the treatment of the flesh
> outstanding. Our country is very pleased with this piece, for it is the first
> time that French marble has been used for a work of this kind. Until now
> sculptors have used Italian marble.[47]

Considering her great interest at that time in promoting the creation of French
porcelain that could compete with that imported from China and Dresden, it
seems probable that it was the marquise herself who requested this block for
her portrait. As Olga Raggio points out, it is quite possible that she desired the
first experiment with French marble to be her sculpted portrait, which was

47   Quoted in Olga Raggio, "Two Great Portraits by Lemoyne and Pigalle," *The Metropolitan
       Museum of Art Bulletin* 25 (1967): 222.

commissioned primarily to appeal to the king and maintain her status at court at a time when her official position was at risk.[48]

Following the creation of the 1751 bust, Madame de Pompadour employed Pigalle on a regular basis for her later, most important, quasi-public commissions, developing an iconography of friendship in order to establish her place in court after she ceased to be the king's lover.[49] This bust, however, shows the twenty-seven-year-old marquise radiant with her success at court. Her head is turned slightly to the side, and she is depicted with a gentle smile and charming dimples. Her hair is made up in tight curls, with a small bouquet pinned on top. Her elegant neck and sensual shoulders emerge from the folds of her garment, which is edged with a wide lace border. Much was written in reference to Pigalle's graceful portrayal of Pompadour and to her gentle smile, soft skin, and Venus-like nudity. Raggio has specifically remarked on Pigalle's tendency toward simplicity, which did not suit the taste of Madame de Pompadour:

> Characteristically enough, Pigalle [...] adopted a solution that [...] was entirely his own: he offered a stylistic compromise. Doing away with contemporary dress in favor of classical nudity, he left part of the bosom uncovered, and then gave it an accent of *rocaille* grace by gathering around the torso the rippling folds of a masterfully studied and executed drapery, out of which the smooth line of the shoulders seems to blossom forth with the alabaster-like purity of a classical Venus.[50]

Arguably, this delightful depiction of nudity constituted more than a simple allusion to antiquity. In light of the other works discussed in this chapter, the smile and the exposed breast in the bust of de Pompadour—despite its complete exposure in comparison to the partial exposure of the breast in most other sculptural portraits—might be perceived as a variation on the same motifs. It is even conceivable that Madame de Pompadour took an active part in this formulation; for despite her reputation as a hedonist, she saw herself as an affectionate mother and commissioned several sculptural and painted portraits of her only daughter, Alexandrine, including some famous depictions by François Guérin that presumably show the mother and her daughter together in a domestic setting.

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48   Ibid., 223.

49   Katherine K. Gordon, "Madame de Pompadour, Pigalle and the Iconography of Friendship," *The Art Bulletin* 50 (1968): 249–262.

50   Raggio, "Two Great Portraits by Lemoyne and Pigalle," 228.

During her lifetime, Madame de Pompadour became an art patron whose commissions were associated with the voluptuous atmosphere of Rococo imagery, while also constituting a prime example of how women could become major economic and creative forces in the field of art.[51] At the same time, her important salon, and her personal connections with prominent intellectuals, introduced her to the new ideals of feminine identity, which she participated in propagating together with other prominent women who conducted salons. Significantly, in the large-scale works by Pigalle commissioned by Madame de Pompadour, the female bosom plays a central role: nursing is a major theme in the sculptural representations of de Pompadour, dedicated to Louis xv (see, for example, Jean-Baptiste Pigalle's *L'Amour embrassant l'Amitié*, 1758, Paris, Musée du Louvre). In this light, the unusual exposure of Pompadour's breasts in Pigalle's bust, combined with her overt smile, might indeed have been intended to evoke her maternal image, pioneering the French formula of the semi-nude breast and the smile motif that communicated the new family values in the decades preceding the Revolution.

In accordance with representations of nursing in large-scale sculptures during this time, the act of nursing and the exposed female bosom in genre painting came to symbolize the idea of a happy family. In the celebrated engraving *La Mère bien aimée* (The Well-Beloved Mother), after a painting by Jean-Baptiste Greuze, a happy family is represented through a depiction of the joys of motherhood: the father of the family enters his rural home to find his joyous wife surrounded by their children, while her exposed breasts imply that she is fulfilling her maternal role by nursing her babies. Her natural behavior thus affects the happiness of the entire family, transforming the nude bosom into a symbol of family happiness. In a comparative scene from 1769, Jean-Honoré Fragonard went as far as presenting a happy family with a nursing mother in a composition that resonates with religious scenes of the Nativity (Washington, DC, The National Gallery of Art). Similarly, in Jean-Baptiste Greuze's painting *The Inconsolable Widow* (London, The Wallace Collection), executed in 1762–1763, the exposure of the female breast symbolizes the family's doomed happiness: the young widow caresses the portrait bust of her beloved deceased husband, lamenting the loss of her physical satisfaction as a woman; her bosom will never serve to nurse his children again, nor will it continue to provide her with erotic pleasure.

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51   Rosamond Hooper-Hamersley, *The Hunt after Jeanne-Antoinette de Pompadour: Patronage, Politics, Art, and the French Enlightenment* (Lanham, 2011).

Whereas genre painting depicted actual children and related gestures, the concise nature of portrait busts could make use only of the nude bosom to represent maternal joy, thus neutralizing the representational formula used in painted family portraits. Husband and wife are inevitably represented in two separate busts, precluding intimate gestures between them, while children are obviously excluded, doing away with the iconography of parent-child relationships. These constraints led to the formation of a new representational paradigm and to the recruitment of unique attributes that would allow for participation in the cultural discourse concerning the shifting paradigm of family relations. The category of conjugal pendant busts is particularly important in this context, since the new family model resulted in the flourishing of family portraiture. Whereas the principal function of earlier family portraits was the portrayal of dynastic ties, eighteenth-century depictions of husbands and wives represented the shift towards companionship and the idea of the happy family—emblematized through delightful motherhood.

The bourgeois values of the 'reshaped family' also affected the perception of women and of the family at Europe's royal courts.[52] At Versailles, these domestic ideals were represented in pendant portraits of couples that alluded to the sitters' home and family. One such example is the marble bust of Antoinette-Élisabeth-Marie d'Aguesseau, comtesse de Ségur (fig. 26), which was created in 1783 by Martin-Claude Monot.[53] Guilhem Scherf had described this impressive bust as a double portrait:

> The absence of any drapery to envelop the composition [...] makes the image, when seen from the front, somewhat intimate and disquieting; is it the broken line round the top of the breasts and the sexy turned-over lace edging? By contrast, the left-hand profile, exposing the majestic, sophisticated curls of the hairstyle and the regular pleats of the dress, presents an altogether ceremonial portrait. It is an astonishing portrait with its two female images: one so close and sensual, the other so distant, and representative of the sitter's social rank.[54]

Building on Scherf's observation, I suggest that the intimate aspects of this portrait were undoubtedly tied to the circumstances in which it was created

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52   Simon Schama, "The Domestication of Majesty: Royal Family Portraiture, 1500–1850," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17 (1986): 155–183.

53   Allard et al., *Citizens and Kings*, no. 29, 358–359.

54   Scherf in Ibid., 359.

FIGURE 26   *Martin-Claude Monot*, Marie
d'Aguesseau, comtesse de Ségur, *1783, marble,
h. 68 cm, Versailles, château de Versailles et de
Trianon.*
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (CHÂTEAUX
DE VERSAILLES)/GÉRARD BLOT

and to its purpose. This piece was commissioned from Monot together with
the portrait bust of Marie d'Aguesseau's husband, comte Louis-Philippe de
Ségur (see chapter 4, fig. 40). These pendant marble portraits were originally
intended for exhibition in the private sphere, and bequeathed to Versailles
in 1924 by one of the family's descendants. They were exhibited at the Paris
Salon of 1783, introducing the domestic image of the couple into the public
sphere. Both members of this aristocratic couple are depicted with a soft and
sensible smile. Yet while the count's outfit attests to his glorious military career,
the countess, who was a mother of two when this portrait was made, is repre-
sented in a light dress with a loose lace border that slips off her sensually bared
right shoulder and exposes the tip of her right breast, evoking her natural role
as a nurturing mother. Such loose clothes obviously did not form part of the
countess' appearance in real life, but rather functioned as symbolic attributes.
It is worth noting, however, that during this time fashion did participate in
the cultural discourse on femininity through an emphasis on an increasingly
deeper décolletage, which contributed to the articulation of the maternal ideal

and to the association of the female bosom with the nursing mother.[55] This celebration of the female bosom culminated during the last years of the eighteenth century with the abandonment of the corset in favor of a tight horizontal ribbon directly below the bosom, and a décolletage that left the female breast semi-nude. The natural allure due to Madame d'Aguesseau's bare neck and chest, the absence of accessories, and her unpowdered hair is enhanced by her gentle smile. This conjugal portrait clearly embraces the new family values, and alludes to the domestic sphere inhabited by the count and countess, to their children, and to their redesigned social identities. A similarly strong emphasis on companionship and on the importance of the woman is also expressed in the pendant busts of Charles de Wailly and his wife. These busts, which were created by Augustin Pajou in 1789, are analyzed in the context of representations of masculinity in Chapter 4 (figs. 46–47).

A portrait of the French queen, which one would expect to adhere to the most conservative representational conventions, allows for further probing of these motifs in court circles. Significantly, domestic imagery and the maternal role of the queen can be detected in painted family portraits of the English royal family as early as the 1760s. One such example is the portrait *Queen Charlotte and Her Two Eldest Sons* (London, The Royal Collection), which was produced ca. 1765 by Johann Zoffany. Despite the glamorous setting, an intimate and domestic aura is achieved through the placing of the group in front of the queen's dressing table, which represents a feminine sphere. Seated on a majestic chair, the queen welcomes her young offspring, who leans on her lap. Her smiling face is directed at her older son, the Prince of Wales, while her left hand rests on the family dog's head. This portrait is recognized as an affirmation of the moral strength of the family, in which the mother plays a central role.[56] The garden viewed through the open door behind the dressing table indicates the ease with which the queen assumes her natural role as a mother—a concept further emphasized by her smile and her display of affection. The subject of this painting was not unusual in the context of the English court, which similarly promoted the queen's maternal image through other portraits. Another example is the sensitive depiction of the queen with her two eldest sons, which was created by Allan Ramsey around the same time (London, The Royal Collection).

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55   Barbara Gelpi, "Significant Exposure: The Turn-of-the-Century Breast," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 20 (1997): 125–145.

56   Postle, "The Family Portrait," 183.

Whereas English sculptors did not adopt the French formula for the representation of the new feminine ideal, this ideal is recognizable in images created for the French royal court from the 1770s onward. Marie-Antoinette, Louis XVI's wife, was raised during a period saturated with manifestations of this ideal. She realized the importance of creating a maternal public image, and viewed her official portraits as a powerful propaganda device for shaping her reputation. Her painted portraits, many of which were commissioned from the female artist Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, attempted to establish a novel formula for representing the queen as a dedicated mother, who is always surrounded by her children.[57] In Adolf Ulrich Wertmüller's 1785 painting *Queen Marie-Antoinette of France and Two of her Children Walking in the Park of Trianon* (Stockholm, Nationalmuseum), the queen's maternal comportment is proudly represented as part of her identity. She appears delighted and happy to be spending time with her children—emotions clearly represented by the smile on her face and by her hand gestures. The natural landscape alludes to the queen's perception of herself as a natural woman, fulfilling her natural duties (this same ideal of 'nature' also prompted the creation of her *Hameau*—a rural village inside the Gardens of Versailles, which symbolized the dismissal of civilization's restraints in favor of a natural way of living and rearing children). More importantly, the political subtext of Wertmüller's portrait of the queen involved a statement about Marie-Antoinette's role as the dedicated and happy mother of the French people.

Since the children in this image attest to her maternal, feminine nature, there was no need for an exposed bosom to convey this message. By contrast, a sculpted portrait that intended to propagate the new definition of motherhood had to employ the smile-breast formula, which was by now legible to French viewers. The official portrait bust of the queen created by Félix Lecomte in 1783 (fig. 27), and exhibited in that year's Salon, constituted a unique attempt to display the sitter's high public status, and to evoke the viewer's respect, while conveying tenderness and maternal grace.[58] This combination of majesty and femininity, however, involved an ideological conflict, since public status, pride, and glory were incompatible with the contemporary ideal of womanhood. As Rousseau wrote of the ideal woman in *Émile*: "Her honor is in being unknown; her glory is in respecting her husband; her joys are in the happiness of her

57   On the ineffectiveness of the attempt, see Mary D. Sheriff, "The Cradle is Empty: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, Marie-Antoinette and the Problem of Intention," in *Women, Art, and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2003), 164–187.

58   Hoog, *Musée national du Château de Versialles*, no. 1195, 262.

FIGURE 27   *Félix Lecomte*, Marie-Antoinette, *1783, marble, h. 86 cm, Versailles, Château de Versailles et de Trianon.*
IMAGE: PHOTO BY RONIT MILANO

family."[59] Lecomte thus had to create an iconography that would reconcile the glorified public image of the queen with her maternal and feminine identity: the proud carriage of Marie-Antoinette's head is mitigated by her gentle smile and graceful features. The grandeur of her garment is adapted to fit the desired ideal through the use of several different devices: the tender movement of the shoulders, which creates a graceful effect; the portrait of her husband on the medallion that lies close to her heart, alluding to her admiration for her glorified spouse; and, finally, the exposure of the upper part of her left breast and the carving of her right nipple, which is emphasized by a fold in her garment, underscoring her maternal role and sexual nature.[60]

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59   Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou De l'éducation*, in *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Victor Donatien de Musset-Pathay (Paris, 1823), vol. IV, book V, 322.

60   Rrelating to Marie Antoinette's 1781 portrait by Louis-Simon Boizot (Paris, Musée du Louvre), Guilhem Scherf also construed the bare chest as conveying "the sitter's happy state of prospective motherhood," in Allard et al., *Citizens and Kings*, no. 9, 296.

FIGURE 28   *Jean-Jacques Lagrenée, A Pair of Milkbowls, called 'breast-bowls', for the Rambouillet*
            dairy, c. 1786, bowl: soft-paste porcelain, diameter 13 cm; base: hard-paste porcelain,
            h. 12.5 cm, Sèvres, Cité de la céramique.
            IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (SÈVRES, CITÉ DE LA CÉRAMIQUE) /JACQUES
            L'HOIR/JEAN POPOVITCH

In royal circles, the breast and its association with maternal nourishment
was also related to the production of milk in an agricultural context. Inspired
by Rousseau and by the new ideal of a return to nature, noble and royal women
presided over their own dairy farms as a symbol of their new role as lactating
mothers. Beginning in the 1750s, the concept of *La Laiterie* and images of milk-
maids were romanticized, bringing together the erotic aura of lactation and
related maternal and natural ideals. In June 1787, Louis XVI surprised his queen
with a gift—the dairy at Rambouillet—a personal gesture that was also meant
to contribute to the propagation of a feminine and maternal public image.[61]
This dairy was exquisitely decorated, and equipped with a superb set of por-
celain dishes. Significantly, one of the queen's first initiatives at Rambouillet,
in 1787, was the commissioning of a Sèvres porcelain bowl designed in the
shape of a female breast (fig. 28).[62] The milk bowl, which includes a nipple on
its lower edge, rests on three elaborate goat heads. This famous commission,
which is usually regarded as little more than a titillating anecdote, is in fact
crucial to understanding the queen's desired image as a mother of the French

61   Meredith Martin, *Dairy Queens*: *The Politics of Pastoral Architecture from Catherine de'*
      Medici to Marie-Antoinette (Cambridge, 2011).

62   Most of these bowls were lost. See Selma Schwartz, "The 'Etruscan' Style at Sèvres: A Bowl
      from Marie-Antoinette's Dairy at Rambouillet," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 37 (2002):
      259–266.

people, especially as one imagines the queen's guests drinking milk from her breast bowls. Although this bowl did not lead to a new decorative trend, perhaps due to the approaching Revolution, it further reinforces the association of the semi-nude bosom motif with maternal qualities, and enables us to read Lecomte's portrait of the queen as an evocation of a family portrait centered on the domestic image of the sitter.

As a visual manifestation of an ideology centered on the pursuit of happiness, the visual motifs of the smile and semi-nude breast were thus charged with different meanings depending on the social and ideological context in which they appeared. When viewed in the context of female identity in eighteenth-century France, it evokes the physical constitution of women and an experience of maternal happiness that is based on a woman's relationship with her children and husband in the domestic sphere. Given the unique function of portrait busts, and the widespread distribution of reproductions, busts such as the ones discussed in this chapter functioned as central agents in the articulation and implementation of a new female ideal.

Between Innocence and Disillusion: Representations of Children and Childhood

I will die an old child.
—DENIS DIDEROT[1]

In 1750, a marble bust of a girl with braids known as *La Boudeuse*, by Jacques François Joseph Saly, was exhibited in the Paris Salon (fig. 29, plaster replica). This sensitively depicted, touching portrait proved such a success, that Saly immediately produced a remarkable number of copies in plaster, terracotta,

FIGURE 29 *Jacques François Joseph Saly*, Meisjesportret (La Boudeuse), *c. 1750, painted plaster, h. 45.5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.*
IMAGE: © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM

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1 Denis Diderot, from a letter written on December 13, 1776, in *Correspondance*, eds. Georges Roth and Jean Varloot (Paris, 1955–1970), vol. 15, 24.

FIGURE 30 *François Boucher*, The Arts and Sciences: Sculpture, *detail from* Painting and Sculpture panel, *1750–52, oil on canvas, 217.2 × 96.5 cm* (*entire panel*), *New York, The Frick Collection.*
IMAGE: © THE FRICK COLLECTION, NEW YORK

marble, bronze, and faience. The widespread admiration for this bust and the ensuing market demand for replicas bred a variety of both authorized and unauthorized copies by other artists throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, and into the nineteenth century. Shortly after its first public display, *La Boudeuse* was chosen and copied by François Boucher to serve as the attribute of 'Sculpture' in his series *The Arts and Sciences* (fig. 30)—eight panels that employ images of children as allegorical personifications of the sixteen Arts and Sciences.

Recognizing the prevalence of sculpted portraits of children in eighteenth-century France, Guilhem Scherf notes that while this period was marked by the growing popularity of generic and allegorical images of childhood, the two decades preceding the Revolution were characterized by the canonization of portrait busts representing specific, identifiable children; moreover, it is probable that many of the busts of unidentified children exhibited in France during this period do in fact represent particular sitters.[2] Saly's *La Boudeuse*, for example, is mentioned in the 1750 Paris Salon's booklet as an unnamed marble head of a young girl. It was probably executed in 1744, while the sculptor was studying at the French Academy in Rome after winning the prestigious *Prix de Rome* in 1738. Saly returned to France in 1749, after an eight-year stay at the French Academy. The following year, he participated for the first time in the Paris Salon, where he displayed *La Boudeuse* alongside other works. Discussing the identity of the sitter, Michael Levey suggests this bust to be a portrait of the daughter of Jean-François de Troy, the director of the French Academy at the time of Saly's sojourn in Rome.[3] Building on this hypothesis, Levey suggests that the child's plaintive expression can be explained by the tragically premature death of her mother and six siblings during the early 1740s. Nevertheless, the girl's identity—which, significantly, was not explored in depth in eighteenth-century accounts of this extremely popular bust—remains unknown today.

In what follows, I will thus attempt to offer a more general interpretation of the child's pose, while highlighting the bust's particular and individual character. My discussion of this bust, and of other sculpted portraits of children created during this period, distinguishes them from generic images of childhood, while relating them to the celebration of childhood in eighteenth-century France and to its unprecedentedly wide representation in the artistic and intellectual discourse of the time. More specifically, I examine how these busts negotiated the ideals of self-exploration, self-expression, and the natural self, and operated as sites of extended selfhood shared by their creators, owners, and viewers. At a time when portraiture functioned as a privileged site for the elaboration of new models of selfhood, busts of children, as I will suggest, epitomized the multilayered interrelations between self, family, and society. At

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2   Scherf, "Le portrait sculpté d'enfant," 93.

3   Michael Levey, "A New Identity for Saly's 'Bust of a Young Girl,'" *The Burlington Magazine* 107 (1965), 91 and 95; Guilhem Scherf recently disputed this identification, while concurring that this is indeed a portrait, in *L'enfant dans les collections du musée du Louvre*, exh. cat. (Tokyo, 2009). The catalogue was published in Japanese. The French text is kept at the archive of the Département des Sculptures, Musée du Louvre, n.p.

the same time these portraits also contributed to an intriguing shift in the perception of sculpture, as its traditional affiliation with the exaltation of ancient and ideal forms gave way to its association with charming, approachable images of children that embodied contemporary ideals, and were embraced by both artists and viewers.

In order to contextualize these images, it is necessary to offer some preliminary remarks about the invention of the idea of childhood and its visual roots in the Early Modern period, which served as the basis for eighteenth-century representations of children. Central to any discussion of this theme is Philippe Ariès' groundbreaking study *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, which was published in 1960.[4] In Chapter 2 of this seminal if controversial book, Ariès argues that the 'discovery' of childhood as a discrete phase of existence came about as a result of the developing notion of the family, as distinct from the community of the Middle Ages.[5] Ariès discusses several strands of this visual history as it evolved from the thirteenth century onward—most significantly portraits of children, images of putti, and representations of the infant Jesus.[6] In this context, he sees "the new taste for the portrait" in the fifteenth century as an indication that "children were emerging from the anonymity in which their slender chance of survival had maintained them."[7]

Putti, those winged infants symbolizing the immortal child that are commonly found in Renaissance and Baroque art, appear both as angels in religious painting and as attendants of Cupid, the messenger of profane love, in secular works.[8] The appearance of these ornamental, decorative creatures

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4   Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York, 1962).

5   For the culture of children in medieval times, see Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London and New York, 1990); Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven and London, 2001).

6   Ariès has been taken to task for his portrayal of the unfeeling "brutal parents of the past" by Keith Thomas among others, yet his account of how the essential 'difference' of children can be diagnosed and recognized in pictorial representations remains valuable and unchallenged. Thomas, "Children in Early Modern England", in *Children and Their Books: A Celebration of the Work of Iona and Peter Opie*, eds. Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs (Oxford, 1989), 45–77.

7   Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 40.

8   Considering the role of Cupid, some scholars have suggested that representations of children were used as a covert expression of sexuality in a period which regarded explicit sexual imagery as unacceptable. On the French and English fields, respectively, see Jennifer Milam, "Sex Education and the Child: Gendering Erotic Response in Eighteenth-Century France" in *Picturing Children: Constructions of Childhood between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn

prefigured an additional representational convention—that of the naked child—which Ariès sees as extending from the Renaissance to modern 'artistic portraits' created in the photographer's studio.[9] Unlike the putti, who may represent sacred or profane love, the infant Jesus was a consistent and pervasive icon, the implicit or explicit model for all young children in the history of Western art.[10] As Ariès demonstrates, the idea of the 'holy childhood' has a long history going back to Medieval and Renaissance art. Yet it took several centuries for the image of the Virgin and Child to extend beyond the limits of religious iconography. It was not until the seventeenth century that the lay imagery of childhood detached itself from its religious origins, and children were increasingly represented as characters in anecdotal genre scenes.[11] During this period, portraits of children represented on their own first appeared in the oeuvre of Rubens, Van Dyck, and Hals. The role of children in seventeen-century Dutch art and culture has been examined by Simon Schama, who recognized such representations as the first to approach children in a modern, loving way—an assertion that was later challenged by Jeroen J. H. Dekker and Leendert L. Groenendijk.[12] Importantly, the eighteenth century was also the historical turning-point at which the portrayal of deceased children for the purpose of commemoration and of documenting lineage was abandoned in favor of portraits of living children that symbolized the present or future rather than the past.[13] In this context, it is not surprising that, from a stylistic

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Brown (Aldershot and Burlington, 2002), 45–53; Michael Benton, "The Image of Childhood: Representations of the Child in Painting and Literature, *1700–1900*," *Children's Literature in Education* 27 (1996): 37. This argument, however, is not valid for the images of particular children represented in the genre of the portrait bust.

9   Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 46.

10   These transformations are discussed in Benton, "The Image of Childhood."

11   Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 36.

12   Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches* (London, 1987), chapter 7; Jeroen J. H. Dekker and Leendert L. Groenendijk, "The Republic of God or the Republic of Children? Childhood and Child-Rearing After the Reformation: An Appraisal of Simon Schama's Thesis about the Uniqueness of the Dutch Case," *Oxford Review of Education* 17 (1991): 317–335.

13   James Christen Steward, "The Age of Innocence," in *The New Child: British Art and the Origins of Modern Childhood, 1730–1830*, exh. cat. (Berkeley and Seattle, 1995), 81–101; In ancient times, it was also commemoration which was the prime motivation for the commissioning of busts of children, displaying mostly deceased children. See Jeannine Diddle Uzzi, *Children in the Visual Arts of Imperial Rome* (Cambridge and New York, 2005), 188–189.

perspective, eighteenth-century portraits of children display great vividness and character.

Portraits in general, and portraits of children in particular, proliferated in pre-revolutionary Paris. In contrast to earlier busts, these portraits—which were put on display in the Paris Salon, in shops and public spaces, and on private estates—portrayed a new type of child—one that was alive and individual-looking rather than generic and ideal. The flourishing of the market for such busts was closely related to the new cultural perception of childhood forming during this time. Ariès' discussion of the major historical transformation in the structure of the family in general, and in the perception of childhood in particular, has been expanded upon by more recent studies.[14] In an eighteenth-century context, historians have explored how this new image of the child was propagated by Enlightenment intellectuals, as well as through art and literature. Most art-historical studies of this subject, however, have centered on painted images of children.[15] More recently, Anja Müller has suggested that the rising interest in childhood during this period was not part of a linear development, but rather a consequence of the modern perception of the family as a model for society, which figured prominently in public discourse.[16] In this chapter I wish to add an epistemological perspective, which situates these busts in the context of cultural studies concerned with the formation of the modern, individual self.

Childhood was defined in the *Encyclopédie* as: "the space of time that unfolds from birth until the use of reason, that is to say, until seven or eight years old."[17] The girl in Saly's *La Boudeuse*, who appears to be in this age range, seems to be staring deep into her own soul, inspecting herself in an undoubtedly self-aware

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14   To mention only a few sources: Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge and New York, 1983); Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (London, 2005); Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge, 2001).

15   Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (London and New York, 1998); Christine Kayser, ed., *L'enfant chéri au siècle des Lumières: Après l'Emile*, exh. cat. (Louveciennes and Paris, 2003); Erika Langmuir, *Imagining Childhood* (New Haven and London, 2006); Jennifer Milam, "The Art of Imagining Childhood in the Eighteenth Century," in: *Stories for Childhood, Histories of Childhood/Histoires d'enfant, histoires d'enfant*, ed. Rosie Findlay (Tours, 2007), 1–20.

16   Anja Müller, *Framing Childhood in Eighteenth-Century English Periodicals and Prints, 1689–1789* (Farnham and Burlington, 2009).

17   Arnulphe d'Aumont, "Enfance," in *Encyclopédie*, eds. Diderot and d'Alembert, vol. 5 (1755), 651–652.

manner. Her absorption in this process of self-exploration compels the viewer to similarly acknowledge and explore her constitution as an individual. Saly's subject tilts her head down and slightly to the side, while directing her gaze downwards. The frontal view of the bust and her introverted, introspective gesture, accompanied by a plaintive expression, suggest that she is looking at her chest—alluding to her heart and her inner, vital organs, which are excluded from the bust yet recreated in the viewer's imagination as the source of life and a symbol of truth, virtue and nature—ideals fundamental to Enlightenment thought.[18]

The epistemological message conveyed by Saly's *La Boudeuse* is reiterated and elaborated upon in Boucher's allegorical painting of the child-sculptor, who holds a chisel in his left hand as he directs his gaze just below the rounded bottom of the bust at the exact center of the painted composition, where the sitter's heart would be if it were included in the portrait. The iconographical and compositional devices that evoke the heart as an imagined attribute extend, moreover, to the image of the child-sculptor: his head is similarly tilted downwards while his left hand, which indicates the imagined location of the sitter's heart, simultaneously points to his own heart. In this panel Boucher links Saly's correlation between 'child' and 'truth' to the discourse of art, associating the artist himself with the ideal of truth. This strategy not only forms a powerful statement regarding the artist and his position in society, but also defines the genre of the portrait bust as the purest representation of truth created by a genuine sculptor.

Although Saly's bust was presented in the Paris Salon as an unidentified image, it can hardly be defined as an allegorical representation or as 'a head of expression'—a representational form employed by artists as an exercise in sculptural praxis. The latter was expected to be more dynamic and dramatic in design than the static and calm quality that characterized French sculpted portraits in the mid-eighteenth century. Saly's unsentimental, reserved rendering of childhood and its striking sense of truthfulness haunted modern scholars, who became obsessed with the sitter's identity: in 1945 Michel Benisovich argued, based on a number of works commissioned from Saly by Madame de Pompadour, that this bust represented her daughter, Alexandrine d'Etiolles—supporting an earlier hypothesis put forth by Margaret Helen Longhurst in

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18   The association between the heart and the ideas of truth and self-revelation appears consistently throughout the history of art. Already in ancient Egyptian burial art, one repeatedly finds papyri paintings displaying scenes of 'death trials,' in which the heart is placed on one side of the scales, representing the deceased's degree of truthfulness and virtue.

1933.[19] Two decades later, this identification was refuted by Michèle Beaulieu, based on Saly's own list of works for the marquise.[20] This charming bust nevertheless continued to be read as a portrait of a particular sitter: the child's flesh, the carefully plaited hair, and the distinctly crinkled ears suggested a specific, living model. In 1965, as already mentioned above, Michael Levey suggested that the sitter may well represent de Troy's daughter; yet the fact that this bust was widely reproduced in the 1750s and 1760s disqualifies Levey's attribution, since de Troy's daughter died very young, and it is accepted today that a portrait of a dead child would not have been reproduced.[21]

The contrast between the anonymity of Saly's sitter, whose identity is not clearly mentioned in a single primary source, and between its celebration in numerous copies and reproductions, makes it into an extraordinary case. Nevertheless, scholars agree that this work constitutes a portrait, which apparently appealed to a large audience. This widespread appeal, as I would like to argue, is related to the ideals embodied in this bust, which were obviously legible to the contemporary viewer, and which centered on the notions of truth and interiority. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Enlightenment search for truth and the praise of introspection and sincerity, which are visually embodied by *La Boudeuse*, culminated in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*. Especially significant for the current discussion, however, is the fact that Rousseau articulated these ideals as entertaining a privileged relationship with childhood. His celebrated treatise on child-rearing, *Émile, ou De l'éducation*, which was published in Paris in 1762, mentions the word *truth* 143 times. In Book II, Rousseau claims: "Men may be taught by fables; children require the naked truth." He continues: "[…] expect nothing from him but the plain, simple truth, without addition or ornament and without vanity."[22] In Book IV, Rousseau further related the human heart to the pursuit of the ideal of truth: "My barren heart yielded nothing but a feeble zeal and a lukewarm love of truth."[23]

Although the publication of Rousseau's *Émile* placed it at the center of the French discourse on child-rearing, its subject matter was not entirely novel.

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19   Margaret Helen Longhurst, "Pompadour's daughter: marble bust of a small girl by Jacques Saly in the Victoria and Albert museum," *Connoisseur* 91 (1933): 262–263; Michel Benisovich, "A Bust of Alexandrine d'Etiolles by Saly," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 28 (1945): 30–42.

20   Michèle Beaulieu, "La fillette aux nattes de Saly: Note rectificative," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français* (1955): 62–66.

21   Levey, "A New Identity for Saly's 'Bust of a Young Girl'"; Guilhem Scherf rejects Levey's identification, in *L'enfant dans les collections du musée du Louvre*.

22   Rousseau, *Émile* (2009), 168 and 275 respectively.

23   Ibid., 267.

Rousseau's position was not only influenced by Jean-Charles des Essartz's publication on child rearing, *Traité de l'éducation corporelle des enfants en bas âge*, which was published in 1760, but also by earlier English attitudes to family and childcare, put forth by John Locke in his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, which was published in 1693 and translated to French two years later. Nevertheless, *Émile* immediately won unprecedented success, becoming the most popular French book on this theme. In *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters*, Dena Goodman paints a portrait of a French conjugal relationship built on Rousseau's ideas: through her analysis of the letters of a young married couple who is expecting their first offspring we learn of the joy they take in their joint daily readings in *Émile*, and of their projection of Rousseau's family values onto their relationship.[24] An examination of contemporary images of the philosopher makes it similarly reasonable to presume that Rousseau's contribution was much appreciated during the eighteenth century. The frontispiece of a later edition of *Émile*, published in 1782, after Rousseau's death, displays the writer's image as a sculpted bust, mounted on an elaborate pedestal (London, The British Museum). In this engraving by Robert de Launay after a design by Charles Nicolas Cochin, the bust is surrounded by happy children performing various scenes from Émile's childhood in a forest clearing—a landscape perceived by Rousseau as a natural and ideal setting for children; in the foreground, a mother dutifully reads *Émile* as she breastfeeds one baby and changes another. Her daughter looks on, eager to learn from her mother's example. Two children on the left side of the pedestal present Rousseau with a bouquet of flowers symbolizing gratitude, while echoing his own gesture in Augustin Legrand's celebrated etching *Jean-Jacques Rousseau ou l'Homme de la Nature* (see Chapter 2, fig. 22).

In an anonymous, patriotic color print published by Paul-André Basset in 1794, Voltaire and Rousseau appear as the founders of French society and the French nation (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France). In the revolutionary climate of that time, this choice obviously reflected the common French perception of these two philosophers as the spiritual fathers of Enlightened French society. Voltaire, who appears on the left side of the composition, stands leaning on his cane beside the attributes of classical virtue and of the nation. Rousseau, on the right, is depicted sitting under a palm tree, a setting that calls to mind the prophetess Deborah, who acted as a judge while sitting under a palm tree. The analogy between Rousseau and Deborah—the sole female judge mentioned in the Bible—may suggest Rousseau's unique role in the formulation of female identity in the eighteenth century, as well as his

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24   Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca, 2009), 307–331.

significant moral impact on society. Rousseau is displayed as a warm father fig-
ure, embracing one child while a second child leans on his lap and a third sits
naked on the ground—alluding to the virtuous and natural essence of children
and to the central role they attained in Rousseau's ideology.

The scholarship on children and childhood in the eighteenth century singles
out both Rousseau and Locke as prominent figures, yet these two writers were
obviously not the only ones concerned with child-rearing: both English and
French readers were exposed to an unprecedented number of treatises and
essays on these themes, and themselves participated in this discourse through
letter-writing and personal diaries.[25] Art was similarly active in the promo-
tion of these themes not only by reflecting the growing social interest in them,
but also by propagating a range of statements regarding the new perception
of childhood, child identity, family structure, parent-child relations, and the
relationship between childhood and gender.

One of the first French artists to address these perceptions of childhood
and recognize its significance as part of a new social order was the painter
Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin.[26] Painted in the 1730s, Chardin's *The Laundress*
(St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum) was originally paired with
the painting *Woman Drawing Water at the Cistern*, which similarly displays the
repetitive tasks performed by working women. While the attention of
the laundress, who is disturbed in the midst of her work routine, is drawn to
a point outside the composition, the child in the foreground is absorbed in
blowing bubbles. Chardin's frequent depictions of such self-absorbed figures
offer a prime example of the type of genre scenes discussed in Michael Fried's
groundbreaking study of self-absorbed figures in mid-eighteenth-century
French painting.[27] Fried's analysis of painting in relation to the larger shift in
constructions of modern selfhood has been further complemented by Dror
Wahrman's *The Making of the Modern Self*, which draws a parallel between the
formation of selfhood and the construction of individual identity in England
and in France during the eighteenth century, and further explores the concept
of absorption. In what follows, I will turn from my initial discussion of the
relationship between portrait busts of children and the Enlightenment ideal
of truth to an exploration of how such portraits participated in the discourse

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25   Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500*, esp. 58–69; and idem,
      The Invention of Childhood (London, 2006), chapter 3, 102–136.

26   René Démoris, "Inside/Interiors: Chardin's Images of the Family," *Art History* 28 (2005):
      442–467.

27   Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality*.

on childhood and innocence, while further probing the concept of absorption and the formation of modern selfhood in France.

In French genre paintings of children, the innocence of the depicted subjects is often highlighted by means of a sentimental quality, which is aimed at evoking empathy in the adult viewer. As Emma Barker has recently claimed in her analysis of one of Jean-Baptiste Greuze's many depictions of children, "the image of childhood as an age of innocence was shaped by an awareness of the vulnerability of the child."[28] A similar sentimentalism is evident in sculpted images which, for various reasons, were perceived as genre scenes rather than as portraits—such as Jean-Baptiste Pigalle's famous *L'Enfant à la cage* (Paris, Musée du Louvre). This work, which was commissioned by Pâris de Montmartel as a portrait of his son, was exhibited in the Salon of 1750 unidentified, and its narrative quality led to its perception as a generic representation of childhood (rather than of a particular child). The work became so popular that it was extensively reproduced in various sizes and sculptural materials, quoted in painted portraits, and supplemented by a pendant piece created by Pigalle in 1784 (*Fillette à l'oiseau et à la pomme*, Paris, Musée du Louvre). Another sentimental type of Rococo imagery was represented in porcelain figurines depicting groups of 'natural,' rural children at play or with animals. Many of these groups were produced after designs by Falconet or Boucher. They were created by the porcelain factory in Sèvres, and were widely disseminated in upper-class Parisian interiors.

Significantly, this type of sentimentalism is absent both from Saly's bust and from the other portrait busts of children to be discussed below, which all call the viewer's attention to the singularity of the portrayed figures rather than attempting to awaken his or her compassion or desire to protect children in general. Moreover, these busts, which for reasons I will elaborate upon were often exhibited unidentified, exuded a disillusioned quality that calls for a reexamination of the parallel drawn between childhood and innocence. My analysis of these busts is by no means intended to reject their interpretation as reflections of an 'age of innocence.' Yet in contrast to scholars who have interpreted painted images of children in the eighteenth century as equating innocence with vulnerability, I argue that sculpted portraits of children reveal a more intricate perception of 'innocence.'

One case in point is Louis-Claude Vassé's *Buste de jeune garçon au turban* (*A Boy in a Turban*, fig. 31), which depicts a lively child whose head is turned as if suddenly alerted to an occurrence on his left. His expression is bright, and

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28   Emma Barker, "Imaging Childhood in Eighteenth-Century France: Greuze's Little Girl with a Dog," *The Art Bulletin* 91 (2009): 426–445.

FIGURE 31 *Louis-Claude-Antoine Vassé*, Buste de jeune garçon au turban, *1759, marble, h. 46 cm, Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts.*
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS / RENÉ-GABRIEL OJÉDA

his shoulders and chest are well-defined. Despite the child's nudity, this work cannot be associated with any ideal type of sculpture, and must instead be read as a portrait of a particular child. Vassé, who has been relatively neglected in modern scholarship, was one of the most successful sculptors of his time. In 1739, he won the *Prix de Rome*, and spent a few years at the French Academy in Rome, together with Saly. By that time Vassé had already acquired a reputation for refusing to copy ancient models and for searching for a more original style. Returning to Paris in 1745, he went on to work for the greatest patrons of the time, including several European sovereigns. Most of his colleagues, however, were not fond of him. As Diderot wrote in 1767: "I do not like Vassé, he is a villain, but […] let us be fair and concede what he deserves without respecting the person."[29] In 1759, Vassé's head of a child, known today as *A Boy in a Turban*, was exhibited at the Paris Salon. The boy represented in this bust, who seems to be about four years old, is referred to in a letter by Vassé as his "bambinello,"

29   Diderot, *Salon of 1767*, in *Salons*, eds. Jean Seznec and Jean Adhemar, 4 vols., 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1975), vol. 3, 322.

and was recognized by Bernard Black as the sculptor's son, Pierre-Louis.[30]
While the Italian term *bambinello* is commonly associated with the image of
the infant Jesus in nativity scenes, its literal meaning, 'little baby,' suggests that
Vassé's is referring to his own son. The practice of portraying one's own chil-
dren in sculpture and displaying the works unidentified seems to have been
common at the time, and was also employed by Houdon, among other sculp-
tors. The extreme popularity of portrait busts of children, despite (or perhaps,
as I shall suggest below, because of) their anonymous presentation, is attested
to by their extensive reproduction. Although most of Vassé's busts have disap-
peared, there are at least three marble versions known to us today of *A Boy in
a Turban.*[31]

   Why, though, did Vassé choose to display this bust as a generic (while indi-
vidualized) representation of a child rather than as a portrait of his son? And
why did other creators of such busts similarly choose to withhold the identity
of their sitters? As I would like to argue, this strategy was of central importance
in enabling sculptors to generate images that constituted more than private
statements about the nature of a specific child, and which actively partici-
pated in the construction of a new social and cultural perception of childhood,
as well as of the relationship between parents and children.

   The portrayal of an identifiable child obviously involves certain implica-
tions concerning its parents. In contrast to earlier portraits of children, which
functioned as visual manifestations of lineage and defined them as a reflection
of the past, eighteenth-century portraits of children as distinct individuals sit-
uated them in the present, while also pointing towards a virtuous future. Such
a future, it was understood, was possible thanks to the child's pure, innocent
nature, which was simultaneously viewed as a representation of the parents'
inner, pure and natural self. Vassé's portrayal of his son embodies the dual sta-
tus of such images as representing both their own individuality and that of
the parents who usually commissioned such portraits. Replicas of such busts
played a similar function, projecting the qualities of childish innocence, purity,
and virtue onto those who purchased them; their anonymity and generic qual-
ity enabled these owners, who bore no personal relationship to them, to simi-
larly identify with them as representations of their inner selves.

   Vassé's *A Boy in a Turban* was neither the first nor the only representation of
the artist's child. As early as 1757, he had exhibited at the Paris Salon an uniden-
tified bust of a child with a scarf (fig. 32), who appears to be about two years

30   Bernard Black, *Vassé's' Bambinelli': The Child Portrait of an 18th Century French Sculptor*
      (London, 1994), 35–38.
31   Bennett and Sargentson, *French Art of the Eighteenth Century at the Huntington*, no. 205,
      519–520.

FIGURE 32   *Louis-Claude-Antoine Vassé*, Buste
d'enfant à la tête drapée d'un fichu, *1757, marble,
h. 43.5 cm, Rosanbo Collection.*
IMAGE: © MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE CAEN,
PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTINE SEYVE

old. This portrait was recognized by Black as Adélaïde-Jeanne Vassé, the sculp-
tor's daughter.[32] The girl's unique narrow eyes, pointed nose, mouth, and chin
all recall the physiognomy of her brother, thus supporting Black's assertion.
This portrait was also extensively reproduced, and it is quite probable that the
popularity of the child with a scarf motivated Vassé to wrap a turban-like cloth
around his son's head in the portrait created two years later. The character-
istics of both these portraits are echoed by two other busts created by Vassé
in 1759 (private collection) and 1763 (San Marino, CA., The Huntington Art
Gallery), which depict Adélaïde-Jeanne aged four and eight respectively. The
sensitive portrayal of the children in all four busts attests to an intimate con-
nection between the sculptor and his subjects; at the same time, the sitters are
defined by a sensible character more easily associated with an adult than with
a child. The quiet and introspective portrayal of the child with a scarf further
underscores the distinct quality of such portraits and the distance separating
them from the joyous or sentimental representations of children character-
istic of other artistic genres. The resonance between this image and Saly's *La
Boudeuse*, moreover, calls for a careful consideration of the dual charge of such
images.

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32   Black, *Vassé's' Bambinelli'*, 31–34.

The conception of an inner child alive within the adult self emerged as a novel epistemological construct in the eighteenth century. The function of children as embodiments of adult selves has been similarly noted by Emma Barker in her discussion of genre painting, in which she explains the popularity of generic images of children as implicit representations of their owner's selfhood.[33] The sincere search for such an inner self is discussed by Dror Wahrman, who describes the new tendency towards self-exploration as a key element in the construction of individuality.[34] One of the most substantial manifestations of this tendency was the publication of an unprecedented number of private accounts in the form of letters, diaries, and above all, auto-biographies that posit the purity of childhood at the core of individual experience. As Hugh Cunningham writes in *The Invention of Childhood*, "[…] from the late eighteenth century people use the autobiography as a means of understanding themselves, searching into their childhoods to find the self." He further notes that the eighteenth-century assumption was "that the key to adult life lays in childhood."[35]

Guilhem Scherf has suggested that the anonymity of the portrait busts exhibited at the Paris Salon was primarily due to economical considerations: given the vogue for representations of children, anonymous busts stripped of their paternal attachments could be acquired by art connoisseurs.[36] What I would like to suggest, however, is that the anonymity of these sitters was in fact related to a more comprehensive social ideology regarding the adult self, which was shared by both the artist and his audience. By creating an unidentified portrait bust of a child, the sculptor could disengage himself from the narrow position of a portraitist, and assume the role of an artist-philosopher participating in the social and cultural discourse on childhood and on related formulations of individual identity. The portrayal of one's own children, in this context, enabled the sculptor to articulate a theoretical statement while simultaneously relating it to his own identity, creating a sort of artistic autobiography that exposed his true, natural inner essence in the spirit of Rousseau's *Confessions*.

The sculptor most closely associated with portrait busts of children, and above all of his own daughters, is Jean-Antoine Houdon. In the Paris Salon of

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33   Barker, "Imaging Childhood in Eighteenth-Century France."

34   Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, 287–290.

35   Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, 135.

36   Scherf et al., *Tesouros do Louvre*, 156.

FIGURE 33   *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, Sabine Houdon Aged Ten Months, *1788, marble, h. 44.5 cm (including base), New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.*
IMAGE: © THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

1789, Houdon presented a marble head of a child aged ten months (fig. 33).[37] This was a portrait of his oldest daughter, Sabine, easily identifiable by the sculptor's charming inscription of her nickname "Sabinet Houdon, 1788" on the back of the bust. The work was designated for private display, and was kept by Sabine throughout her life. Images of such young babies were very rare, especially in the medium of sculpture—a fact that may explain the relatively small number of replicas made of this bust. Much like Vassé's portrait of Adélaïde-Jeanne, Sabine's portrait was not created as an ideal representation of childhood, but rather as a personal statement concerning the artist's own process of self-exploration. By presenting the meticulously carved bust of his daughter anonymously, while at the same time imbuing it with a sense of tenderness that could be achieved only thanks to his fatherly affection, Houdon appropriated her image to create a confessional self-portrait. Indeed, it may well be this personal dimension that accounts for Houdon's fondness for sculpting the features of his three daughters. Over the years, he represented Sabine at different ages and in different formats (draped and undraped), alongside busts of

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37   Poulet et al., *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, 137; Bückling and Scherf, *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, 184; Wardropper, *European Sculpture, 1400–1900*, no. 71, 206–208.

his other two daughters. The existence of numerous versions of these portraits, which one could well have expected to be restricted to the private sphere, is indeed astonishing.

The marble version of Sabine's bust is tenderly modeled to create a supple effect, and seems to reveal Houdon's love of life and of his children, which contributes to the bust's impact. The sitter's chubby cheeks and tousled hair create an adorable effect, while Sabine's almond-shaped eyes and unforgettably sharp, alert gaze, together with her unsentimental features, form a rather severe expression. This charming, yet somewhat sad image resonates with the portrait bust of Adélaïde-Jeanne Vassé with a scarf, as well as with Saly's *La Boudeuse*. This discernment might seem surprising given the Enlightenment perception of childhood as an 'age of innocence,' a happy and carefree stage of life. Rousseau himself, however, claimed that "those of us who can best endure the good and evil of life are the best educated."[38] His position, as expressed in *Émile*, is that a child must learn through experience, while confronting both good and bad things: "We begin to learn when we begin to live; our education begins with ourselves."[39] A child's and even a baby's life is neither carefree nor exclusively happy. 'Innocence' as a synonym for childhood thus embodies a dimension of confrontation and endurance, so that the 'age of innocence' is at the same time perceived as 'the age of disillusion.'

The concept of 'disillusion' is naturally associated with adult life, with experiences of confrontation, with a capacity for reasoning, and with 'sensibility.' This last term was central to the literary, philosophical, and artistic discourse of the eighteenth century, which is often referred to as 'the cult of sensibility.' The term 'sensibility' is associated with empiricist philosophy, which calls for a judgment based on the acquisition of experience through the human senses, and is combined with an appreciation of feeling. The meticulous and sensitive busts created by Houdon and Vassé, for example, both correspond to the demands of the 'cult of sensibility:' the soft folds in Sabine's armpits endow the sculpted surface with a palpable quality that stimulates the beholder's senses, while her facial expression conveys a combination of reason and feeling.

The capacity of children for reasoning, however, was a subject for debate. Whereas Rousseau's *Émile* was profoundly influenced by Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, when it came to the extent to which children were perceived as sensible creatures, Locke and Rousseau offered two opposing views: while Locke found children to be rational creatures and called for reasoning

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38   Rousseau, *Émile* (2009), 19.

39   Ibid.

with them and searching for the 'man in the child,' Rousseau advocated the need to explore 'the child in the man,' and explicitly attacked Locke's stand:

> 'Reason with children' was Locke's chief maxim; it is in the height of fashion at present, and I hardly think it is justified by its results; those children who have been constantly reasoned with strike me as exceedingly silly. Of all man's faculties, reason, which is, so to speak, compounded of all the rest, is the last and choicest growth, and it is this you would use for the child's early training. To make a man reasonable is the coping stone of a good education, and yet you profess to train a child through his reason! You begin at the wrong end, you make the end the means. If children understood reason they would not need education.[40]

A brief comparison between two representative examples of English and French portrait busts of children seems to reflect this difference between Locke and Rousseau's views, as well as their intermingling. Locke's perception of childhood is clearly evident, for instance, in the portrait bust of John Barnard (fig. 34), created in 1744 by John Michael Rysbrack. Rysbrack was born and trained in Antwerp before moving to London in 1720, at the age of twenty-six.[41] During the following two decades he became the foremost sculptor in his adopted country, carving statues for Chiswick House, Kensington Palace, and Westminster Abbey. This Flemish-born artist was a dominant force in developing the psychologically penetrating portraiture of Augustan England, particularly through portrait busts of children. Although his portrait bust of Barnard depicts an eight-year-old boy whose fashionable attire stands out in contrast to Locke's recommendation that children wear loose and unrestrictive clothing, his intelligent features have a wasted quality to them, and are marked by a serious expression that reveals his 'sensible' nature. The boy wears the extravagant Hussar uniform that became a symbol of British sympathy for Hungary and Vienna during the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748). Undoubtedly, the choice of attire corresponds to the perception of 'the man in the child'; together with the boy's astute and solemn facial features, this uniform participates in the representation of a subject who is at once sensible and disillusioned.

The inscription on the back of Rysbrack's bust reads *John Barnerd* (the spelling of the surname varies in contemporary accounts), and it is believed

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40   Rousseau, *Émile* (2009), 117.

41   On this bust, see Katharine Eustace, "The key is Locke: Hogarth, Rysbrack and the Foundling Hospital," *British Art Journal* 7 (2006): 43–44; Wardropper, *European Sculpture, 1400–1900*, no. 59, 172–173.

FIGURE 34   *John Michael Rysbrack*, Bust of John Barnard, *1744, marble, h. 43.5 cm, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.* IMAGE: © THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

to depict the likeness of John, the son of William Barnard, who held a succession of ecclesiastical posts and was also one of the founders of the Foundling Hospital in London. Although the purpose for which this bust was created remains uncertain, its reading as both a particular likeness and a generic image of childhood is certainly related to the father's association with the Foundling Hospital, which was established in 1741 as a consequence of the growing interest in childhood as an innocent and natural state of being. Rysbrack was known for the fine finish of his marbles, yet in this case the innocence and simplicity of the young Barnard's face shine forth despite the carefully polished surface and serious, grownup costume.

French portrait busts of children, by contrast, were characterized by a fresh and tender quality that is absent from their English counterparts. This distinction, moreover, is unrelated to the young age of the French sitters examined above, and can be applied to the majority of busts of children independently of their age. Martin-Claude Monot's portrait of Louis-Antoine d'Artois, duc d'Angoulême (fig. 35), may serve as a suitable comparison with the portrait of John Barnard.[42] At the time of its creation, in 1783, Louis-Antoine was eight years old—the same age as John Barnard at the time of his portrayal by Rysbrack. Monot executed this terracotta bust after a marble version he had

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42   Hoog, *Musée national du Château de Versialles*, no. 36, 35.

FIGURE 35   *Martin-Claude Monot,*
Louis-Antoine d'Artois, duc d'Angoulême,
c. 1783, terracotta, h. 48 cm, Versailles,
château de Versailles et de Trianon.
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (CHÂTEAU
DE VERSAILLES) / FRANCK RAUX

exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1783. The boy's innocent and charming charac-
ter is sensitively conveyed by means of a tender expression, accompanied by
a slight smile. Yet although this portrait corresponds to Rousseau's approach
by emphasizing the child's naive and pure nature, it cannot be perceived as a
cheerful or carefree representation due to the boy's sensible gaze and attentive
appearance, which recalls the Lockean view of the child as possessing reason
and other grown-up qualities.

This new approach to childhood as the nexus of innocence and reason, as
well as of nature and the social order, is further expressed by Monot's choice of
attire: Louis-Antoine d'Artois wears a loose, semi-open shirt, without a jacket
or any fashionable accessories. This artistic choice is compatible with Locke's
views on the matter, as well as with Rousseau's claim:

> There should be nothing tight, nothing fitting closely to the body, no belts
> of any kind. The French style of dress, uncomfortable and unhealthy for a
> man, is especially bad for children.[43]

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43   Rousseau, *Émile* (2009), 201.

FIGURE 36   *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, Sabine
Houdon à l'âge de quatre ans, *1791, plaster,
h. 52 cm (40 cm without base), Paris, Musée du
Louvre.*
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS / GÉRARD
BLOT

Like other busts of French children during this period, d'Artois' bust employs
the same visual formula associated with French philosophers, which promotes
the ideas of self-exposure and sincerity I discussed in Chapter 1. In contrast to
earlier depictions of children dressed in fashionable adult outfits, the motifs
of the philosopher's semi-open shirt or nude chest reinforce the child's asso-
ciation with adult interiority. This pseudo-philosophical image conveys the
perception of childhood as a state of innocence mixed with disillusion, while
simultaneously representing the child as a pure and natural form of the adult
self.

A similar mixture of innocence and sensibility is made evident in another
portrait bust of Sabine Houdon that was created by her father in 1791, when
she was four years old. Houdon executed two versions of this portrait: a
draped marble bust that was exhibited in the same year's Paris Salon, and a
nude version sculpted in plaster (fig. 36).[44] Once again, the sculptor created an

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44   For both versions, see Scherf et al., *Tesouros do Louvre*, no. 19 and fig. 19, 155–156; The
      draped bust can be also found in Boilly's painting of Houdon's studio (see Conclusion,
      fig. 63).

extraordinarily charming representation of his own daughter. Her rounded face and soft skin and lips recall her tender baby's body, while the serious gaze of the earlier portrait has been transformed into a lighter one; nevertheless, the absence of laughter or of a mischievous expression is in keeping with the notion of sensibility. Her chubby shoulders and chest have disappeared, yet the gentle folds of the neck remain. Why, one may wonder, did Houdon create a bare-chested version in addition to the original draped bust of Sabine? And why did he choose to cut the bottom of the bust so low as to expose her nipples, in what seems to be a most unusual representation?

It is difficult to answer these questions without taking into consideration the plaster portrait bust of Madame Houdon, Sabine's mother, which was created five years earlier (see Chapter 2, fig. 15). The low cut of Madame Houdon's bare chest is similarly unusual, and exposes the upper part of the sitter's breasts, while the fine lines on her forehead and temples, which indicate a few strands of hair, are revealed to be the source of the similar details in Sabine's bust. Madame Houdon's bust, which was created as a private portrait, was exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1787 as an unidentified image, much like the bust of Sabine at the age of ten months. In the Salon of 1791, the portrait of Sabine at the age of four appeared alongside the unidentified bust of her sister, Anne-Ange Houdon, aged fifteen months (Paris, Musée du Louvre). At the Salon of 1793, Houdon exhibited another unidentified bust of his daughter Claudine, who was about a year old at the time (Worcester, Massachusetts, Worcester Art Museum). Sabine's marble portrait at the age of four, which included drapery that covered her right shoulder and exposed the left one, was the only instance in which Houdon exhibited an identified bust of one of his family members. This portrait was not created for private familial purposes, but rather for one of Houdon's patrons, the banker Jean-Girardot de Marigny—a fact that was mentioned in the 1791 Salon catalogue. It was probably for this reason that Houdon created a second version of this bust for his own family, this time altering it to resemble his wife's undraped bust. The bare-chested plaster busts of Madame Houdon and of Sabine at the age of four were both preserved by direct descendents of Claudine Houdon, the sculptor's third daughter, and were always displayed together. Considering the special meaning that arises from the positioning of the girls' portraits next to that of their mothers in a domestic setting, it is worth noting that the unique relations between mothers and daughters received special attention from Rousseau in *Émile*[45] and were extensively represented in art—for instance, in Vigée-Lebrun's *Self-Portrait with Her Daughter* and Nattier's *Madame Marsollier and Her Daughter* (see Chapter 2, figs. 20–21).

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45   "her [Sophie's] mother is her confidant in all things." Rousseau, *Émile* (2009), 865.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the exposed chest of Madame Houdon as an artistic motif alluding to breastfeeding and motherhood, and tied the physical and mental satisfaction gained from these roles to the motif of the smile as a symbol of maternal delight and female happiness. Interestingly, this motif—which is an index of the pleasure inherent to the mother-child relationship, is absent from many busts of children. Indeed, the juxtaposition of the laughing and lighthearted image of Madame Houdon and the sensible, relatively serious image of her daughter Sabine at the age of four, who appears at once as a child and as a woman, raises some intriguing questions regarding the perceived relations between childhood and happiness. Taken together, these two busts seem to represent Rousseau's perception of 'the child in the man' versus Locke's perception of 'the man in the child.'

The reading of Sabine's bare chest in the second version of the bust can also be explained as a representation of her natural character and purity. The exaltation of 'nature' was fundamental to Enlightenment ideology: nature was extensively paralleled with the concept of 'truth,' and both concepts were central to Rousseau's treatise on children. The exhortation to be a 'natural man' is one of the major threads running through *Émile*: it is both the goal of the child's education and the key to his happiness. Guiding Émile in his search for happiness, Rousseau claims that "for the natural man happiness is as simple as his life."[46] Rousseau was not the first philosopher to tie together nature and happiness. The ancient Greek philosopher Seneca had already stated: "for we must use Nature as our guide; [...] to live happily is the same thing as to live according to Nature."[47]

This prevalent theme of 'the return to nature' is obviously related to the vogue for images representing the nude body as natural, innocent, and pure. By sculpting the bare-chested bust of Sabine as a companion piece to her mother's nude bust, Houdon defined his family as a happy, 'natural' family that corresponded to Rousseau's ideal of domesticity. Enhanced by the presentation of Madame Houdon as a natural mother—a key element in the construction of the ideal family—the sculptor manifested the mother's happiness through her breasts and broad smile. Sabine's happiness, by contrast, is conveyed through her childish features and her natural, naked body, alongside an allusion to the future fulfillment of her feminine role. In this manner, Houdon created a personal statement about his family, whose qualities—projected onto his

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46   Ibid., 312.
47   Lucius Annasus Seneca, *On the Happy Life*, book VIII, in: *Moral Essays*, trans. John W. Basore (London, 1928–1935), vol. II.

own being—constitute a self-portrait of sorts shaped by the ideals of natural behavior and happiness.

Nonetheless, one may still wonder why Houdon chose to exclude a smile from Sabine's portrait while clearly using it as an index of happiness and of a natural state of being in Madame Houdon's bust. In book III of *Émile*, Rousseau writes:

> Love childhood, indulge its sports, its pleasures, its delightful instincts. Who has not sometimes regretted that age when laughter was ever on the lips, and when the heart was ever at peace?[48]

Yet Rousseau's claim that laughter is always on a child's lips in fact contradicts his own approach to childhood, as he encourages Émile to explore negative situations and to experience frustration and sadness. Émile's achievement of happiness involves reaching a mental balance and fulfilling himself as a man of nature. In this context, the statement quoted above must be understood as a reflection of the human longing for a spontaneous and innocent state, which is mistakenly imagined as resulting in laughter. The portrait busts of Madame Houdon and of Sabine at the age of four convey these same ideas: Houdon created an image of a sensible child whose path towards happiness is predicated upon her natural being, whereas his wife's smile reflects an adult yearning for the pure and happy state of childhood.

In 1777, Houdon exhibited in the Paris Salon two of his most celebrated busts: the portraits of Alexandre and Louise Brongniart (fig. 37), the children of the celebrated architect Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart.[49] Preceding the portraits of his own children, these busts demonstrate Houdon's marvelous capacity for conveying the freshness and innocence of childhood in a manner devoid of sentimentalism. The Brongniart portraits, which were exhibited as identified pendants, seem to represent clearly defined personalities, and appear both sensible and sincere. Alexandre, a future geologist and director of the Manufacture de Sèvres, is portrayed at the age of seven. Louise, the future marquise Picot de Dampierre, was five years old at that time. When Houdon was chosen to sculpt these children's portraits, he was already a famous artist. He had displayed an interest in portraying children as early as his student days in Italy, and his first contribution to the Salon, in 1769, included a marble head of

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48   Rousseau, *Émile* (2009), 94.
49   Poulet et al., *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, nos. 15–16, 127–132; Scherf, *Houdon 1741–1828*, 160–163.

FIGURE 37   *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, Alexandre et Louise Brongniart, *1777, terracotta,*
              h. 36 cm (Alexandre), 34 cm (Louise), Paris, Musée du Louvre.
              IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (MUSÉE DU LOUVRE) /
              HERVÉ LEWANDOWSKI

a child that elicited praise.[50] In 1774, he signed and dated a superb portrait of a child in terracotta that may depict the son of the vicomte de Noailles (private collection),[51] and whose rounded truncation and absence of clothing antici-pated the presentation of Louise Brongniart three years later. In 1779, Houdon also exhibited a "head of a small child" and "another head of a child" at the Société des beaux-arts in Montpellier[52]—subjects that reflect the burgeoning cultural interest in childhood.

The portraits of the Brongniart children enjoyed great popularity at the time and were widely reproduced, sometimes with fanciful variations in the choice of clothing. For reasons that remain unclear, Houdon chose to represent the

50   Jean-Claude Pingeron, *Réflexions sur quelques morceaux de peinture et de sculpture exposés au sallon du Louvre . . .* (Paris, 1769), 27.

51   Illustrated in Poulet et al., *Jean-Antoine Houdon,* fig. 1, 130.

52   Henri Stein, "La Société des beaux-arts de Montpellier (1779–1787)," *AAF: Mélanges offerts à M. Henry Lemonnier par la Société de l'histoire de l'art français, ses amis et ses élèves* (1913): 402.

two children in a contrasting manner: Alexandre is dressed in a fashionable shirt, whereas Louise is portrayed in the nude. Despite his sensible outfit, one of Alexandre's buttons is undone, echoing his loose wisps of hair. Louise's hair, by contrast, is carefully coiffed with a bun held in place by a headband and topped with a knot. Her lips are slightly open, while her brother's are closed. As has already been noted by other scholars, there is also a clear distinction in the treatment of Alexandre's and Louise's eyes, which has been explained as an indication of Houdon's desire to represent the difference in their colors.[53] While Louise's irises are carved into a deep bowl to give the impression of a dark color, Alexandre's are rendered with two concentric rows of radiating incisions to give the impression of light-colored eyes. The contrasting artistic representation of their dress and hair, however, remains to be explained.

Alexandre appears as the embodiment of Émile: The innocence and freedom conveyed through his childish, rounded features and mischievous wisps of hair are mitigated by his sensible outfit and attentive gaze. The bust places Alexandre within a particular social order, identifying him as poised to become a respectable, intellectual Parisian man. Louise's nudity, on the other hand, detaches her from any historical or cultural context. Her bare chest reveals her spiritual and pure nature, endowing her with a timeless and spontaneous appeal. At the same time, her meticulous hairdo does relate her to the Parisian social order of the time, pointing to her feminine qualities and to her upbringing. If Alexandre can be compared to Émile, Louise was designed by Houdon to resemble Sophie, Émile's female counterpart, who appears in book v of *Émile*. Louise, like Sophie, represents a 'natural woman' in the making: a sensible yet innocent girl, who is attached to her natural self while learning to fulfill the feminine duties that will be expected of her as a wife and mother.

Towards the end of Rousseau's treatise, the grownup Émile begins his search for a wife. At this point, his mentor advises him: "We are in search of love, happiness, innocence; the further we go from Paris the better."[54] Houdon, it seems, takes Rousseau's advice in his portrayal of the Brongniart children, which represents the gendered perception of childhood prevalent at the time as a prefiguration of adult social roles. When read in the context of Houdon's busts of Madame Houdon and of Sabine at four, the portrait of Louise Brongniart can be understood as an index of femininity: Houdon cut Louise's bust at the bottom, leaving her prepubescent nipples exposed as he did in his second portrait of Sabine to hint at her future fulfillment of the maternal ideal. The pendant busts of the Brogniart children are thus at the same time a portrait of particular

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53   Haarvard Rostrup, *Grandeurs et misères de Jean-Antoine Houdon* (Paris, 1973), 17.

54   Rousseau, *Émile* (2009), 706.

individuals and a portrait of the ideal, natural family. The resemblance of these portraits to Monot's pendant portraits of the comte and comtesse de Ségur (figs. 26 and 40) is not coincidental: both pairs of busts constitute a simultaneous portrayal of a particular couple and of a familial (and by extension social) ideal. The generic elements in the design of these busts thus enable the viewer to identify with the represented figures and to participate in the creation of a conceptual collective autobiography of contemporary French society.

In fact, Houdon was not the only sculptor to implement these ideas in his portraits. Five years earlier, Augustin Pajou had created pendant portraits of a boy and a girl, probably the children of his close friend, the architect Pierre-Louis Moreau (private collection).[55] As in the case of the Brongniarts, the Moreau children are represented in a contrasting manner: the boy is elegantly dressed in a fashionable outfit, whereas his older sister is portrayed *à l'antique*, with drapery that exposes her shoulders and chest. Both busts suggest an association with adult life: the boy's attire and his wig-like hairdo, which stand in opposition to his tender and innocent facial features, define him—through an association with the intellectual social milieu—as 'a natural man.' The girl's portrayal as an ancient goddess and her elaborate coiffure, which are countered by her realistically and tenderly depicted face, call to mind images of adult women allegorically portrayed as the goddess Diana (see Chapter 2, figs. 16, 18 and 19). By distancing her from what Rousseau saw as the corruption and indulgences of the city, she is defined as a virtuous and 'natural' woman-to-be. Once again, this association with the sphere of adulthood enables the portraits to also symbolically represent the identified sitters' parents, thus generating a natural image of the entire family's present and future, rather than its past.

The absence of such gendered distinctions in portraits of young babies can be explained by the conception of boys and girls as equal in the early stages of their development. Both Locke and Rousseau agreed that males and females had similar capacities for reasoning, and that the basic principles of education should disregard gender differences. Additionally, children of both sexes were dressed similarly—in long petticoats—until somewhere between the ages of three and seven (this turning point seems to have come earlier as the century progressed).[56] Such busts are thus commonly marked by the exclusion of contemporary or allegorical attire—replaced, in some cases, by a scarf or other type of cloth (as is the case of the portraits of Adélaïde-Jeanne Vassé and of Claudine Houdon). Once again, this approach corresponds to Locke and

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55   Draper and Scherf, *Augustin Pajou*, 223–224; Scherf, *Houdon 1741–1828*, 160–161.

56   Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, 120.

Rousseau's call for non-restraining, loose clothes for children, and especially for babies—in contrast to the earlier practice of tightly wrapping babies in a long cloth in order to straighten their bodies.

The stylistic motif of the scarf or kerchief is especially interesting, since its popularity as a decorative motif in portrait busts of children stands in contrast to the actual absence of this accessory among the Parisian upper classes. This motif thus further underscores the intricate interrelations between the formulation of culturally meaningful statements concerning Enlightenment ideals, commercial considerations, and the indexicality of fashion accessories. As mentioned earlier, Vassé's choice to envelop the head of his son with a piece of cloth in *A Boy in a Turban* might have well been influenced by the popularity of his earlier bust of his daughter—an image of an infant with a scarf. The popularity of this motif is made similarly evident in one of the most celebrated eighteenth-century busts of children, Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne's *Fillette coiffé d'un fichu* (*Young Girl with a Scarf*, Paris, Musée du Louvre).[57] This bust, which was signed by Lemoyne in 1769, is presumably a replica of one displayed in the Paris Salon of 1761, just a couple of years after the exhibition of Vassé's bust.[58] A similar choice is discernible in a later version after Houdon's portrait of Louise Brongniart, which is today thought to be one of numerous variants:[59] in this marble version (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art), the elegantly knotted scarf that binds Louise's hairdo in the original version appears as a looser, more rustic headdress. This replica also includes a ruffled scarf that emphasizes the little girl's simply truncated, exposed chest. In 1784, Louis's father, the architect Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart, commissioned a portrait bust of his younger daughter, Alexandrine-Émilie Brongniart, from the sculptor Jean-Louis Couasnon (fig. 38).[60] Couasnon's portrait conforms to the formula analyzed in this chapter, displaying the dualism of childhood as a period marked by both innocence and sensibility: whereas the loose outfit and the rustic kerchief appear as motifs that tie the image of the child to nature and to the innocent state of childhood, the exposure of one breast, together with the smile on Émilie's face, recalls the artistic formula used in portrait busts of women in order to convey their maternal role and the happiness gained from

57 *Musée du Louvre: Nouvelles acquisitions du department des Sculptures* (*1980–1983*), exh. cat. (Paris, 1984), no. 21, 64–65, entry by Jean-René Gaborit.

58 Scherf, *L'enfant dans les collections du musée du Louvre*, n.p.

59 Scherf, *Houdon 1741–1828*, 160.

60 Michèle Beaulieu, "Le buste d'Émilie Brongniart par J. L. Couasnon," *Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France* 24 (1974): 105–108.

FIGURE 38   *Jean-Louis Couasnon*, Alexandrine-Émilie Brongniart, *1784, terracotta, h. 35.2 cm* (*with base: 44.2 cm*)*, Paris, musée du Louvre.*
IMAGE: © MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, DIST.
RMN-GRAND PALAIS / PIERRE PHILIBERT

its fulfilment. While this latter formula itself draws on an ideal and natural image of rural life and behavior, Couasnon's combination of these elements simultaneously places the image of the young girl in the realms of innocent childhood and sensible adulthood—both of which are shaped by the ideal of a natural state.

My reading of eighteenth-century portrait busts of children has aimed to reveal the intricate messages embodied in these representations, and thus to expand upon the perception of childhood as the 'age of innocence.' By exploring the connection of these busts to another Enlightenment idea, that of sensibility, I have pointed to their relation to the adult sphere and to their function as representations of the adult viewer's (or creator's) inner self. In conclusion, I would like to briefly relate to the differences between painted and sculpted portraits of children. As already noted, the distinct constellation of cultural meanings embedded in portrait busts of children stood out in contrast to the sentimental charge characteristic of painted representations during the same period. One notable exception to the view of childhood portrayed in the medium of painting is the one captured by Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, who was an avid fan of Rousseau's ideas, and whose portraits seem to form a link between sculptural and painted portraits of children at the time. A brief examination

FIGURE 39 *Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun*, Julie Lebrun, *1787, oil on panel, 73 × 60.3 cm, private collection.*
WORK IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

of her works, which similarly draw a connection between innocence and disillusion, serves to further highlight the cultural significance of the intersection between these concepts in the 'age of sensibility.'

Vigée-Lebrun, who was a close friend of the architect Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart, herself executed a portrait of Émilie Brongniart at the age of eight (London, The National Gallery). This painting, which was created in 1788, was probably the one exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1789. Although Émilie is depicted at play, her gentle smile, which echoes the one in Couasnon's bust, is balanced by her sensible, penetrating gaze. Her hand appears to grasp an invisible, mysterious object hidden inside the bag, as if grasping a truth that is known to her alone. The perception of childhood as a natural state is further emphasized by Émilie's simple, semi-transparent white cloth garment, the matching, rustic scarf, and her loose hair. This unusual portrait is embedded with a narrative quality implicit to the story of eighteenth-century childhood in Parisian circles. Playfulness, innocence, and simplicity are intertwined with reason, psychological observation, and sensibility to form an image that can be defined as simultaneously representing 'the man in the child' and 'the child in the man,' thus attesting to the unique interrelation between the two concepts during this period.

Vigée-Lebrun's depictions of her own child amplify this interrelation and support the correlation I have attempted to draw between representations of the artist's children and his view of his own inner self: in her 1787 portrait of her daughter Julie (fig. 39 see previous page), the girl is portrayed in profile looking at herself in a mirror, her head lowered in an introspective gesture reminiscent of Saly's *La Boudeuse*. The angle of the mirror is clearly incompatible with the full face reflected on its surface. Yet by ignoring the laws of perspective, Vigée-Lebrun not only offers two different views of her daughter's face, but also injects into the painting an interpersonal gaze that involves Julie's mother, as well as any other adult beholder. Julie's introspective gesture is enhanced by her reflection, whose angle in fact corresponds to the position of Vigée-Lebrun herself as she looks at the canvas. At the same time, Julie's reflection in the mirror gazes directly out of the painting at the viewer, as if capturing his or her own image as a child. Vigée-Lebrun's reflective image of Julie offers an exceptional demonstration, in painting, of the portrait bust's operation: Due to their performative nature, busts of children constituted a reflective, mirror-like site, where the viewer could encounter an image of inner selfhood in the form of an individual child. Recalling the concept of the sculptor-philosopher, we may thus describe portrait busts not only as participating in the articulation and dissemination of the Enlightenment construction of childhood, but also as contributing to the larger formation of eighteenth-century French selfhood.

Transitional Identities: Family Structure, the Social Order, and Alternative Masculinities at the Dawn of Modernity

> *Things had then already come to such a pitch, that they could no longer continue as they were.*
> —JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU[1]

In contrast to the clearly discernible shifts in the representation of women and children, which were discussed in the previous chapters, an examination of male portrait busts created during the eighteenth century reveals the absence of a single, recurrent artistic formula. Instead, portrait busts of men employ a range of inconsistent representational strategies that preclude the ability to point to a cohesive construction of masculinity or to a coherent shift in its perception. In exploring the sculptural portrayal of French men during the decades preceding the Revolution, this chapter thus probes the ways in which they reflect a larger social and cultural crisis pertaining to the definition of masculinity, which resulted in the formation of several alternative models for formulating and representing male identity. The resulting confusion, or even frustration, which may be experienced by the reader confronted with the numerous inconsistencies, conflicting themes, and visual motifs discussed in this chapter is, I would like to argue, a reflection of the experience of eighteenth-century viewers confronted with the ambivalent quality of these busts.

Significantly, despite the ambivalence inherent to these representations, male portraits constitute the largest group of original busts commissioned during this period. Almost every male member of the haute bourgeoisie and the aristocracy who could afford to do so commissioned a sculpted portrait. Paradoxically, however, this was also the least reproduced category of portrait busts—a crucial point given the instrumentality of reproductions in propagating and shaping categorical identities.

Martin-Claude Monot's 1783 bust of Louis-Philippe, comte de Ségur (fig. 40), which was mentioned in Chapter 2 as a pendant to his wife's portrait,

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1 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality," in *The Social Contract; and, The Discourses*, trans. George Douglas Howard Cole (London, 1993), 84.

FIGURE 40   *Martin-Claude Monot*,
Louis-Philippe, comte de Ségur, *1783,*
marble, h. 68 cm, Versailles, château de
Versailles et de Trianon.
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS
(CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES) /
GÉRARD BLOT

exemplifies the cultural ambivalence concerning the ideal image of French
men as it evolved during the second half of the eighteenth century, under
the reign of Louis XV and Louis XVI.[2] Comte Louis-Philippe de Ségur was an
important member of the French aristocracy. Like his father before him, he
embarked on a successful military career, followed by several important dip-
lomatic nominations. He was the oldest son of the marquis Philippe Henri
de Ségur, who was appointed Maréchal de France the same year that Louis-
Philippe's bust was sculpted by Monot. This portrait was executed upon the
count's return from America, where he participated in the American War of
Independence. In comparison to his wife's portrait (see Chapter 2, fig. 26), the
count's portrait is characterized by a haughty air: he is represented in a mili-
tary uniform that affirms his status as a member of the nobility, with his hair
curled in ringlets round his head. The austere composition is embellished by
a cloak slipped over his shoulders and tied in front with a bow. Nevertheless,
the smile on the face of this highly esteemed colonel and diplomat clearly dis-

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2   For this bust, see Hoog, *Musée national du Château de Versailles*, no. 1572, 338.

tinguishes it from traditional representations of similar male figures, which are characterized by stern, solemn expressions. The earlier type of visual formula for representing male sitters, which was prevalent throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, is typically rich in folds and curls, using both the drapery and elaborate Baroque wigs in order to create a dynamic and powerful image. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, such pompous and solemn representations were gradually replaced by relatively soft and sensitive depictions of male sitters. In this context, the gentle, graceful expression on de Ségur's face seems to indicate a major shift in the perception and representation of masculinity.

The comte de Ségur's military identity is emphasized by his epaulettes and his upright posture. Nevertheless, the heroic quality of this masculine image is moderated not only by his gentle smile, but also by the choice to exclude more traditional military symbols in order to underscore the sitter's sophisticated, intellectual air. By comparison, Augustin Pajou's smiling bust of Gaspard, duc de Clermont-Tonnerre (fig. 41), which was exhibited in the Salon of 1767, portrays the sitter in armor topped by a glamorous mantle, and proudly wearing the

FIGURE 41 *Augustin Pajou, Gaspard, duc de Clermont-Tonnerre, maréchal de France, 1767, marble, h. 74 cm, Beaune, Hospice de la Charité.*
IMAGE: JEBULON, WORK IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

cordon bleu and plaque of the Ordre du Saint-Esprit.[3] Gaspard, who was still the marquis de Cruzy et Vauvillers when Pajou created his bust, had enjoyed a brilliant military career: he was made lieutenant general in 1734, and distinguished himself in the greatest battles of the War of the Austrian Succession under the maréchal de Belle-Isle and the maréchal de Saxe. After shining in the battle of Leuffeld in 1747, he was named maréchal de France. Pajou made the first version of this bust in 1765, when the marshal was seventy-seven years old, combining a magnificent torso with a naturalistic and sensitively portrayed face. This choice received significant criticism from Diderot, who noted the following in 1767:

> What is this fury to eternalize a face, when it is that of a fool? It seems to me that when one chooses to occupy oneself with an imitative art, one must first have the vanity of examining what this art can do. If I were the artist and someone brought me a face this bland, I would transform it as much as it could stand. [...] There is nonetheless a sculptor's touch, some beauties of skin and flesh in this insipid face. It is made generously; there is some suppleness, feeling, life.[4]

The humanization of the soldier's features in place of the solemnity typical of traditional masculine images, and the combination of a triumphant, heroic-looking torso and a natural, sensitive face, was not exclusive to Pajou.[5] As early as 1750, Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne executed a highly animated portrait of Ulrich Frederic Waldemar, comte de Löwendahl (Paris, Musée du Louvre), who was appointed maréchal de France together with Gaspard. Much like the portrait created by Pajou, Lemoyne's bust juxtaposes sensitivity, natural features, and a gentle smile with elaborate armor and royal decorations.

Monot's portrait of the comte de Ségur clearly departs from Pajou and Lemoyne's pompous depictions of their sitters' torsos. Beyond the reality of changing military apparel, which became lighter in the last decades of the eighteenth century, the simpler appearance of the comte de Ségur and the lesser emphasis on military symbols might also stem from the different purposes of these busts. While Pajou and Lemoyne's busts were commissioned as public portraits, and designed to represent French loyalty and political virtue,

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3   For this bust, see Draper and Scherf, *Augustin Pajou*, no. 93, 232–234.

4   Denis Diderot, *Ruines et paysages: Salons de 1767,* eds., Else Marie Bukdahl, Michel Delon and Annette Lorenceau (Paris, 1995), 488.

5   On the reconceptualization of military masculinity, see Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh, eds., *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester, 2004).

Monot's bust, which was commissioned as a pendant to the bust of his wife, Marie d'Aguesseau, was of a more private nature. This context may account for Monot's choice to create a softer image, which underplays the official dimension of the count's life in favor of his function as a husband and father. The count's portrait, which is sixty-eight centimeters high, is indeed significantly smaller than the busts by Pajou and Lemoyne, which measure seventy-four and seventy-seven centimeters respectively; it was designed to be equal in height to the bust of his wife, an effect which—complemented by his humble, gentle air—reflects the construction of the modern man as a loving husband.

The eighteenth century was marked by a shift from the traditional view of husbands and fathers as stern authority figures who commanded veneration and obedience to their view as companions deserving of love and affection. Indeed, the ideal of companionship gradually came to constitute the core of the 'happy family'—in itself a newly formulated construct. As discussed in Chapter 2, the repositioning of women's social and cultural roles was central to this transformation in the status of the family; yet men, too, were charged with an important role in creating a happy home and, as a consequence, attaining personal happiness. In 1765, Diderot stressed the responsibility of men in this context:

> Keep your family comfortable, give your wife children; give her as many as you can; give them only to her and be assured of being happy at home.[6]

Personal happiness, which was another new objective formulated as part of the Enlightenment project, thus involved—or even required—happy familial relations. And such relations, in turn, required a profound change in both conjugal and parental ideals. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, both philosophers and artists formulated and propagated new ideals regarding family structure and values. Thinkers such as Buffon, Rousseau, and the *Encyclopédistes* almost unanimously regarded marriage as the happiest and most natural of states, believed that its success depended on mutual consent, and encouraged parents arranging a marriage for their children to prefer their children's right to personal happiness over material interests.

In the sphere of artmaking, this 'Enlightenment campaign' included moralizing genre scenes as well as commissioned portraits of real families that increasingly reflected the new concepts of conjugal love, family harmony, and mutual respect. The enlightened man was not merely a devoted husband, but also a loving father whose relations with his children reflected a new approach

6　Diderot, *Salons*, eds. Seznec and Adhemar, vol. 2, 155.

towards childhood and towards the education and upbringing of children. This approach is clearly communicated by the unknown author of the essay on paternal love in the *Encyclopédie*, which opens with the following words:

> If human reason, or rather the abuse one makes of it, does not sometimes serve to corrupt his instinct, we would have the license to say this about *fatherly love*.[7]

Being a 'good father'—a term that became prevalent in France at this time—thus depended upon the privileging of emotion over reason.[8] For although reason, which was viewed as an adult faculty characteristic of a mature society, stood at the core of Enlightenment thought, Rousseau, for example, found it to contradict the ideal of fatherly behavior—a stance compatible with that of the anonymous author quoted above. This ideal parental attitude towards children was associated with instinct and feeling. Describing the way to transform a child into a virtuous man, Rousseau wrote: "We have now to make him loving and tender-hearted, to perfect reason through feeling."[9] This task, according to Rousseau, was to be performed by a 'natural' father who raised his children at home, attended to them, and tutored them. Traditional paternal behavior was harshly criticized by Rousseau:

> Ambition, avarice, tyranny, the mistaken foresight of fathers, their neglect, their harshness, are a hundredfold more harmful to the child than the blind affection of the mother.[10]

The construction of this new paternal image thus contributed to the creation of a masculine ideal characterized by tenderness, affection, and openmindedness—qualities that are all made evident in Monot's portrayal of the comte de Ségur.

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7   "Paternal Love," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Robert H. Ketchum (Ann Arbor, 2007). http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo. did2222.0000.833, accessed June 3, 2014. For the French, see Diderot and d'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, vol. 1, 369.

8   On the changing ideal of 'good fatherhood', see Leslie Tuttle, "Celebrating the Père de Famille: Pronatalism and Fatherhood in Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Family History* 29 (2004): 366–381.

9   Rousseau, *Émile* (2009), 368.

10   Ibid., 991.

At the same time, however, this shift in the perception of masculinity was also perceived as leading to the de facto erosion of male authority.[11] Importantly, although they advocated conjugal companionship and mutual consent, Enlightenment thinkers still maintained that fathers should be the final authority at home. In this spirit, the same unknown author who promoted the expression of paternal love in the essay quoted above also states:

> The two motivations of the human heart are the mind and fear. Fathers and kings, you have in your hands all that is necessary for activating these two passions.[12]

Relating to the desired consequences of the nurturing of fear and obedience among children, Dena Goodman notes in her analysis of Rousseau's *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, which, published in 1761, was one of the most popular books of its time, that when forced to choose between eloping with her lover and marrying the man chosen for her by her father, Julie decides to obey the will of her parents.[13] At the same time, despite his conservative views on paternalism, Rousseau further contributed to the ambivalent positioning of the father by emphasizing the importance of a child's respect for his mother over that of respect for his father:

> There are occasions when a son may be excused for lack of respect for his father, but if a child could be so unnatural as to fail in respect for the mother who bore him and nursed him at her breast, who for so many

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11   On the perception of masculinity in France at that time, see Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1996); Katherine Astbury and Marie-Emmanuelle Plagnol-Diéval, eds., *Le mâle en France, 1715–1830: représentations de la masculinité* (Oxford and New York, 2004); Anne C. Vila, "Elite Masculinities in Eighteenth-Century France," in *French Masculinities: History, Culture and Politics*, eds. Christopher E. Forth and Bertrand Taithe (Basingstoke, 2007), 15–30; Henry French and Mark Rothery, "Hegemonic Masculinities? Assessing Change and Processes of Change in Elite Masculinities, 1700–1900," in *What is Masculinity? Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World*, eds. John Arnold and Sean Brady (Basingstoke, 2011), 139–166.

12   "Paternal Love," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project.* For the French, see Diderot and d'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, vol. I, 370.

13   Dena Goodman, "Marriage Calculations in the Eighteenth Century: Deconstructing the Love vs. Duty Binary," in *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History* 33 (Ann Arbor, 2005), 146–147.

years devoted herself to his care, such a monstrous wretch should be smothered at once as unworthy to live.[14]

While such opinions inevitably resulted in the weakening of the traditional perception of masculinity, fine art and literature frequently rose to defend fallen patriarchal authority in a manner that further attests to the crisis of masculinity and, consequently, of the male image in mid-eighteenth-century France.[15] Jean-Baptiste Greuze's paintings on this subject, which were publically exhibited and admired in the Paris Salon, overtly promoted filial virtue—thus implicitly admitting and lamenting its lack in real life.[16] The concern with the crisis of patriarchal authority, which increasingly preoccupied Salon painters, culminated with the theme of Oedipus, which appeared with exceptional frequency in the 1790s.[17] An understanding of this cultural climate sheds light on Monot's choice to design an inconclusive image of the comte de Ségur, which conveys neither unquestionable power and authority nor pure affection and sensitivity.

Indeed, despite the private nature of this bust, it would be mistaken to strip it of its public and political significance. As already discussed in the introduction to this book, in the latter part of the eighteenth century the distinction between the public and private spheres was largely blurred. The pendant portraits of the comte and comtesse de Ségur as new models of masculinity and femininity were exhibited in the Paris Salon, publically manifesting their place within a new familial order that was conceived of as a microcosm of society. As family values became in themselves important indices of French virtue, such images came to constitute a political statement: men who conformed to Rousseau's ideal of an exemplary family life, assuming an authoritative, yet loving and supportive paternal role, were also perceived as 'virtuous' Frenchmen in the political sense of this term.

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14   Rousseau, *Émile* (2009), 990.

15   For the concern with fallen patriarchal authority in French literature, see Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1992); Allan H. Pasco, *Sick Heroes: French Society and Literature in the Romantic Age 1750–1850* (Exeter, 1997); Jeffrey Merrick, "Prodigal Sons and Family Values in Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of European Studies* 33 (2003): 107–118.

16   Carol Duncan, "Fallen Fathers: Images of Authority in Pre-Revolutionary French Art," *Art History* 4 (1981): 186–202; An alternative view is expressed by Robin Howells, "Patriarchy, Pathos, Power: The Figure of the Father in Later French Enlightenment Literature and Painting," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31 (2008): 47–62.

17   James R. Rubin, "Oedipus, Antigone, and Exiles in Post-Revolutionary French Painting," *Art Quarterly* 36 (1973): 141–171.

In reality, however, the message communicated by such hybrid images was not always understood as promoting a desirable model of manhood, and was viewed as especially problematic in works that incorporated a gentle smile into the traditionally heroic portrayal of military commanders and high-ranking officers. As Diderot wrote in 1765 in reference to an earlier version of Pajou's smiling bust of Gaspard de Clermont-Tonnerre (see fig. 41): "Pajou made him innocent and stupid."[18] Since the lower part of this bust is conservatively modeled to represent a traditional, proud masculine image, Diderot's impression of innocence and stupidity must be attributed to the simple facial expression, and more specifically to the smile. In his *Essais sur la peinture*, he similarly stated that:

> A portrait may look sad, somber, melancholic, serene, because these states are permanent; but a laughing portrait is without nobility, without character, often even without truth, and as a result is foolishness.[19]

Diderot even expressed resentment concerning his own painted portrait by Michel Van Loo, writing in his critique of the Salon of 1767 that the "[…] head is too small, pretty like a woman eying, smiling."[20]

Curiously enough, this observation is inconsistent with other cases in which smiling male portraits were praised by Diderot, including his own portrait by Marie-Anne Collot (see Chapter 1, fig. 12), which was displayed in the same exhibition as the portrait by Van Loo. Given the prevalence of smiles and their positive reception in sculptural portraits of philosophers, including those of Diderot, as well as their prominent role in busts of women, Diderot's mixed response to the appearance of the smile motif may indeed appear puzzling. Yet upon closer observation one notices the fundamental difference between Van Loo's portrait and the one created by Collot: The visual motifs in Collot's portrait of Diderot come together to form a unified formula that communicates a clear set of intellectual concepts, so that the bust constitutes an arena where the self can be coherently formulated and represented. Van Loo, by contrast, created a narrative scene of a particular philosopher sitting by a desk, writing and reflecting. In this latter context, Diderot's representation as a man within a realm dominated by decorum, rather than as a philosopher placed in a virtual sphere of ideas, awakened his expectation to be portrayed

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18   Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres completes*, vol. 14: *Salon de 1765*, eds Bukdahl, Lorenceau and May, 300.

19   Denis Diderot, *Essais sur la peinture; salons de 1759, 1761, 1763*, eds May and Chouillet, 68.

20   Diderot, *Salon of 1767*, xi, in *On Art and Artists*, 104.

in a respectable manner. The smile, in this case, seems to have been viewed as a confusing motif—one associated, according to Diderot's own critique, with femininity rather than with a natural state of happiness. In this light, Diderot's reaction to Pajou's bust of Gaspard becomes clearer: if a smile was problematic enough in any representation of a man, its employment in public portraits of military figures in official dress could be understood as extremely controversial.

Conforming to Diderot's view, and thus departing from the ambivalent type of figure portrayed in the busts of Gaspard de Clermont-Tonnerre and of the comte de Ségur, other sculpted busts or full-length portraits of military officers—such as Houdon's bust of the marquis de Lafayette (fig. 42) were relatively solemn.[21] Born into an old noble family, Gilbert du Motier de Lafayette was a courtier to Louis XVI, and a hero of both the American and the French Revolutions who had championed freedom, human rights, and equality. In

FIGURE 42   *Jean-Antoine Houdon,* Marie-Joseph-Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, *c. 1789, painted plaster, h. 62.5 cm (with base: 76.1 cm), Boston, The Boston Athenaeum.* IMAGE: © BOSTON ATHENÆUM

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21   Poulet et al., *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, no. 45, 257–262; Stanley Ellis Cushing and David B. Dearinger, eds., *Acquired Tastes: 200 Years of Collecting for the Boston Athenæum* (Boston and Hanover, 2006), 261–265.

1776, at the age of twenty-one, he sailed to America to offer his services to General George Washington, becoming his second-in-command. He was a brilliant soldier and a close friend of major political figures in America. Lafayette returned to America in 1780 and was charged with the defense of Virginia, which brought about the surrender of the British troops besieging Yorktown in October 1781 and ended the American Revolutionary War. In gratitude, the Virginia Assembly voted in 1784 to commission two marble busts of Lafayette, one for the city of Paris and the other for the American state. Following the recommendation of Thomas Jefferson, this commission was given to Houdon.[22]

The Athenaeum bust illustrated here is one of many replicas and variations based on Houdon's original portrait of Lafayette, which were all modeled on a life mask taken by Houdon in July 1785, when the marquis was in France. Although the fate of the bust installed at the Hôtel de Ville in Paris in 1786 is unclear, the second original marble of Lafayette, which was similar to the first, was sent to America, survived, and is today located in the Capitol Building in Richmond, Virginia. The original busts were truncated relatively low; the uniform of the American Revolutionary Army is covered by rich drapery that wraps around the arms and encircles the marble base in a style similar to Houdon's portrait of Louis XVI, which was exhibited by the sculptor together with Lafayette's bust at the Salon of 1787 (see Chapter 5, fig. 58). The Athenaeum bust, which is made of plaster and painted white, features a similar head design but is truncated higher up. Since it is one of the informal copies Houdon made for private sale, the drapery was eliminated, thus doing away with the Baroque-style grandeur that characterized the original composition. This bust of Lafayette was acquired by Thomas Jefferson directly from Houdon in Paris in November 1789. It arrived in the U.S. as part of a large shipment of Jefferson's French acquisitions, which included furniture, paintings, prints, and sculptures, among them several other plaster busts by Houdon. At Monticello, Jefferson placed this bust of Lafayette in his tea room, which contained a 'gallery of worthies,' alongside three other portraits by Houdon, representing Great Men who were personal friends of Jefferson's: George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and John Paul Jones.

In accordance with the ideas promoted by Lafayette himself, Houdon portrayed his face in a natural manner conveying simplicity and directness. By contrast, the sitter's expression is serious, his posture is erect, and his head is slightly elevated. Hanging from his lapel are the cross of the Ordre de Saint Louis, awarded to Lafayette by Louis XVI in 1783, and the badge of the Society

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22   Charles Henry Hart and Edward Biddle, *Memoirs of the Life and Works of Jean Antoine Houdon: The Sculptor of Voltaire and of Washington* (Philadelphia, 1911), 228–230.

of Cincinnati—America's oldest patriotic organization, which was founded in 1783 by officers of the Continental Army and the French officers who served alongside them in the American Revolution. All the same, when compared to Pajou's portrait of Gaspard de Clermont-Tonnerre, Lafayette's image seems simpler and more accessible. Ironically, the portrait of Clermont-Tonnerre, which—with its cuirass, mantle, and prominent symbols of the royal Ordre du Saint-Esprit—is far more pompous than that of Lafayette, struck Diderot as too innocent and as stupid because of its warm smile.

Despite Diderot's critique, other commentaries on the Salon of 1767, in which Clermont-Tonnerre's bust was exhibited, were more positive: the *Avant-coureur* praised the "truth" of the portrait, and the *Année Littéraire* admired the likeness and its "virile, knowledgeable execution."[23] The strong masculine impression noted by the critic of the *Année Littéraire* was dismissed by Diderot, probably due to the sitter's soft and sensitive facial representation. As these divergent reviews reveal, the changing perception of masculinity led, in some cases, to its interpretation in utterly contradictory ways. Pajou's portrait of Clermont-Tonnerre and Monot's bust of the comte de Ségur both embody the new correlation between masculinity and softness, which other artists and patrons chose to avoid. By the mid-eighteenth century, the smile motif appeared above all in images of philosophers and of men who wished to associate themselves with intellectual circles. The intellectual climate of the period, which encouraged the employment of this formula in representations of ordinary men, can be summed up by Horace Walpole's comment following his trip to Paris: "Now everybody must be a *geometre*, now a *philosophe*, and the moment they are either, they are to take up a character and advertise it."[24] Given this impression that everyone in Paris wished to see himself as a philosopher or intellectual, and considering the positive reception of the smile in portraits of French philosophers, its employment in portraits of other male sitters could be similarly understood as revealing an interest in self-exploration and sincerity, rather than in social status and authority. Nevertheless, such softer portrayals of masculinity did not enjoy a cultural consensus, and did not acquire the status of a visual convention.

In contrast to Houdon's solemn image of Lafayette, the sculptor Louis-Philippe Mouchy depicted comte Maurice de Saxe (fig. 43) with a warm smile,

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23   Quoted in Draper and Scherf, *Augustin Pajou*, 233.

24   Horace Walpole, a letter to Sir Horace Mann, 20 December 1764, in *Letters of Horace Walpole—Volume II*, Project Gutenberg. http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/12074, accessed June 4, 2014.

FIGURE 43 *Louis Philippe Mouchy*, Maurice, maréchal-comte de Saxe, *1778–9, marble, h. 83 cm, Versailles, château de Versailles et de Trianon.* IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES) / FRANCK RAUX

creating an image comparable to Pajou's portrait of Clermont-Tonnerre.[25] Maurice de Saxe was a German nobleman in the service of the French army, whose brilliant military career earned him the title maréchal de France in 1743. This 1778 bust was commissioned from Mouchy for the gallery of great Frenchmen in Versailles. As a posthumous portrait designed to commemorate the sitter for posterity, this bust differs from the ones discussed above, and is of particular interest because of its smiling face and light air, which are uncharacteristic of commemorative works. Like Clermont-Tonnerre, Maurice de Saxe is depicted wearing a mantle rich with folds and curves that partially covers an elaborate cuirass, and is topped by the prominently displayed *cordon bleu*. He is presented as a powerful and virile man whose attire and luxurious wig indicate his social status, while his elevated head alludes to his esteemed position. All these lofty attributes and motifs are attenuated by the sitter's facial expression: the skin is delicately worked, the eyes gaze down modestly, and the smile conveys a pleasant personality—soft and sincere. In the posthumous portrait of the same sitter painted by Maurice Quentin de La Tour in 1765 (Dresden,

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25   Hoog, *Musée national du Château de Versialles*, no. 1559, 335.

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden), this formula is taken a step further: the royal *cordon bleu* accompanied by the cross of the Ordre du Saint-Esprit, is mitigated by the soft texture of the skin, the compassionate eyes, and the delicate smile, and all military attributes are excluded from the composition in favor of contemporary clothing. In the absence of the cross and the riband, La Tour's portrait of the marshal could have easily been mistaken for one of a philosopher.

Mouchy, by contrast, made a clear distinction throughout his work between images of philosophers and those of military heroes, mostly through his treatment of the lower half of the busts. A comparison between his bust of Maurice de Saxe and his portrait of Voltaire (Versailles, Chateaux de Versailles et de Trianon), which was created the same year for a similarly commemorative purpose, makes this distinction clear: Whereas both portraits are characterized by a smile and a natural facial expression, they differ from one another substantially in terms of the social attributes they depict: Maurice de Saxe's fashionable wig and elaborate uniform place him in a contemporary, worldly sphere of military heroes; he is to be admired and viewed as a symbol of bravery and French virtue, yet the natural portrayal of his face also makes him seem human and approachable. As in the case of Pajou's bust of Clermont-Tonnerre, this bust displays the tension between a lofty image that makes manifest the social status of the sitter and his authority, and the ambition to expose a natural, tender individual whose qualities are related to the new perception of manhood. Voltaire, on the other hand, is presented as a spiritual figure, whose Roman clothing, bare chest, and wigless head place him within an ideal sphere of great philosophers. While his erect posture and elevated head make him, too, appear admirable and lofty, the natural portrayal of the face, the soft eyes, and the smile create an accessible and earthy image. Although they are shaped by the explicit distinction between the social functions of these two figures, both of these busts by Mouchy represent a contemporary ideal of French virtue, while implicitly tying it to the new ideals of naturalism, tenderness, and truth.

Historians interested in gender have long recognized the ambivalence inherent to eighteenth-century formulations of masculinity, which were rooted in a broader social crisis concerning paternal authority. Prior to the eighteenth century, the authority of men—in relation to both women and to other men—was visually mediated through their powerful and extravagant appearance. In portraiture, stern expressions were accompanied by elaborate costumes that included rich and impressive wigs, and their absence implied exposure, vulnerability, and weakness. As Marcia Pointon asserts:

> The wig was both the essential component in the maintenance of a social order for which the economy of the fashionable male body provided a metaphor *and* the vulnerable part of the body through which authority and power could be undermined and destroyed.[26]

The simpler, more modest wigs represented in mid-eighteenth-century busts of men reflect a new fashion that further attests to the cultural shift in the perception of masculinity: replacing the lavish, pompous wigs traditionally associated with decorum and used to showcase public status and male power, these softer wigs resulted in a less authoritative image, while legitimizing the ideal of self-exposure—and thus may be related to the bare-headed busts of philosophers discussed in Chapter 1.

The early eighteenth century was characterized by powerful images of men that reflected an ideology of authority. Jean-Louis Lemoyne's 1703 famous bust of Jules Hardouin Mansart, Louis XIV's chief architect (Paris, Musée du Louvre), portrays a heavy, assertive and confident figure—an effect achieved mainly through the extravagantly adorned clothes and the rich and elaborate wig, which come together to create a profusion of fabric, lace, and curls. As the century progressed, the growing resentment towards the French nobility and the privileged social classes was paralleled by the gradual abandonment of this extravagant style in favor of a simpler, modest, and more natural one. This phenomenon was noted in 1930 by John Carl Flügel, who coined the term "The Great Masculine Renunciation" to refer to this historical shift.[27] This renunciation, which occurred in the decades preceding the French Revolution, did away with the traditional representation of male status symbols. As described by Barbara Gelpi:

> Men of the wealthier classes, who in earlier centuries had participated along with women of similar class in lavish and changing forms of self-display, were beginning to adopt the dark colors and comparatively consistent styles in dress that were to seem 'natural.'[28]

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26 Marcia Pointon, "The Case of the Dirty Beau: Symmetry, Disorder and the Politics of Masculinity," in *The Body Imaged: The Human Form of Visual Culture since the Renaissance*, eds. Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon (Cambridge, 1993), 188.

27 John C. Flügel, *The Psychology of Clothes* (London, 1930, reprint 1950), 111.

28 Gelpi, "Significant Exposure," 125–126.

The previously masculine function of representing social status was gradually conferred on women, whose attire became prominent in mid-eighteenth-century imagery and ideology. Appearing as it did parallel to the smaller male wig, the extravagance of female fashions reflected the growing prominence of women, while symbolizing their social status. Yet women's centrality to social life was still seen in the context of a patriarchal familial or social structure. In theory, women's growing visibility within society endowed them with power and independence; in practice, however, they remained subjected to the masculine gaze, while their visibility served as an index of their husbands' (or fathers') economic power and social position.[29] In this context, masculine identity was increasingly formed by images of women; or, as Kaja Silverman has claimed, a man was "to see himself (and thus to be seen) as 'the one who looks at women.'"[30]

Yet as the unprecedented number of portrait busts representing men makes clear, this surge in the visibility of women did not come at the expense of male visibility. Furthermore, the representation of a humble smile and a soft facial expression, which could be read as indices of relinquished male authority, is notably absent from some portraits, quite possibly in order to maintain a traditional image of authority. One case in point is the portrait of the tapestry merchant Jean-Joseph Pruvost-Mustelier, which was created in 1784 by Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Cadet de Beaupré (fig. 44). Cadet de Beaupré portrayed his sitter gazing forward, towards a slightly elevated point in space, with tight lips and a serious facial expression. Pruvost-Mustelier, it is important to recall, was 'only' an upper-middle-class merchant; given the derisive treatment of this social class by the aristocracy, his masculine authority had to be clearly communicated.

Nevertheless, even this portrait is not free of ambivalence: the sitter wears relatively simple clothes associated with a more natural, gentle image of masculinity. Moreover, his head is adorned with a fashionable bagwig, referred to by Diderot as "the most modern" of all wigs.[31] The bagwig became emblematic of the socio-economic transition that placed Pruvost-Mustelier in the position of a so-called equal to members of the upper class. This wig was at first worn only while traveling, running morning errands, or getting around in the rain—all informal activities that required a great deal of movement; it was

29   On this view, see Shoshana Felman, "Rereading Femininity," *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981): 19–44; Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, 1988).

30   Kaja Silverman, "Fragments of a Fashionable Discourse," in *On Fashion*, eds. Shari Benstock and Suzanne Ferriss (New Brunswick, 1994), 187.

31   "Perruque," in *Encyclopédie*, eds. Diderot and d'Alembert, vol. 12, 401.

FIGURE 44 *Jean-Baptiste Antoine Cadet de Beaupré*, Jean-Joseph Pruvost-Mustelier, marchand tapissier à Valenciennes, *1784, terracotta, h. 70 cm, Valenciennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts.*
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS / RENÉ-GABRIEL OJÉDA

considered indecent to appear in a bagwig before high-ranking figures or while attending public ceremonies.[32] Yet as Conrad Walther explained at the time:

> [T]he invention appeared convenient, men desired to make use of it. With time, bagwigs acquired some consideration: they were allowed to appear in the best company.[33]

Over time, bagwigs became the standard for fashionable dress. The wig displayed in Pruvost-Mustelier's bust thus had its origins, as already noted by Michael Kwass, "not in the stiff and conspicuous public ceremony of the royal court, but rather in the less formal hustle and bustle of daily life under the Regency."[34] Both the wig and the clothes represented in this bust can therefore

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32   Michael Kwass, "Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France," *American Historical Review* 111 (2006): 648.

33   Conrad S. Walther, *Manuel de la toilette et de la mode*, 3 vols. (Dresde, 1771–1780), vol. 2:v, chapter 2, 15.

34   Kwass, "Big Hair," 648.

be read as ambivalent social emblems, which may stand for the fashionable taste, economic power, and authority of the upper classes, or, alternately, for the values of simplicity and informality, convenience and naturalism, which endow the sitter with a more common character. In this context, the sitter's masculinity appears equally ambivalent, and is presented in a manner at once complex and inconclusive.

The depiction of a stern facial expression, which in Pruvost-Mustelier's portrait might be attributed to his social position and to his need to appear powerful to the bust's male viewers, was not exclusively employed to represent members of the middle class such as merchants, professionals, and successful artisans. It is similarly evident, for example, in Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne's bust of Daniel-Charles Trudaine, France's *Intendant des finances*, and director of the *corps des ponts et chausses*, which was created in 1767 (fig. 45).[35] Trudaine, who was charged with overseeing the civil engineering projects of the French

FIGURE 45   *Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne,* Daniel-Charles Trudaine, Intendant général des Finances, directeur des Ponts et Chaussées, *1767, marble, h. 87.5 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.* IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (MUSÉE DU LOUVRE) / MARTINE BECK-COPPOLA

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35   Réau, *Une dynastie de sculpteurs au XVIIIᵉ siècle*, no. 101, 97–98 and 149; Gaborit, *Sculpture française du musée du Louvre*, vol. 2, no. RF 1443, 464.

state, including all bridges and roads, was responsible for the creation of several thousand kilometers of royal routes (now known as the '*routes nationales*') designed to link Paris to France's frontiers and main seaports. Commissioned in 1764 by the board of professors of the Paris Law School, and exhibited in the Salon of the same year, this portrait functioned as a public representation. Despite Trudaine's reputation and high social status, Lemoyne chose to depict the sixty-four-year-old sitter with a solemn, non-smiling face. At the same time, the meticulously carved wrinkles on Trudaine's forehead and his sunken cheeks and chin endow him with a natural and earthy quality. Once again, as in Pruvost-Mustelier's portrait, the resulting image communicates an ambivalent conception of masculinity, which wavers between vigor and softness. This tension is furthered by Trudaine's attire. Although Lemoyne chose to depict Trudaine wearing relatively simple clothes of the kind that were in fashion at the time, thus placing him within the contemporary sphere with its challenges to traditional masculinity, the diagonal curves and volume of the mantle evoke a sense of movement, glory, power and authority of the kind associated with Baroque-style busts.

A more cohesive design and clearcut message are evident in Pajou's sensitive bust of his lifelong friend, the court architect Charles de Wailly. Pajou and de Wailly met at the French Academy in Rome in 1754, and their friendship endured until the architect's death in 1798. Their two houses, both designed by de Wailly, were adjacent to one another. De Wailly had remained a bachelor until 1781, when—at the age of fifty-one—he fell in love with sixteen-year-old Adélaïde-Flore Belleville and wed her. In 1789, Pajou produced pendant busts of the couple and exhibited them in that year's Salon. Although the original marble bust representing Charles de Wailly is now lost, the image is known to us through drawings and replicas. One of the copies is the plaster bust at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Lille (fig. 46). This copy is possibly smaller than the original marble, which was most likely equal in height to the bust of Madame de Wailly (fig. 47).[36]

The circumstances surrounding this commission are not known. Whereas friendship portrait busts, which were often self-commissioned and allowed the sculptor greater artistic freedom, tended to be executed in terracotta or plaster, this pair was made of marble—a fact that implies an official commission. This choice was perhaps related to the couple's financial condition, which improved after they had been obliged to sell their art collection the previous year. Both busts were intended for the couple's private use, yet for reasons

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36   Draper and Scherf, *Augustin Pajou*, 267–270; Allard et al., *Citizens and Kings*, no. 93, 360–361; Wardropper, *European Sculpture, 1400–1900*, no. 72, 209–211.

FIGURE 46   *Augustin Pajou*, Charles de Wailly, *1789, plaster, h. 40 cm* (*with base: 73.5 cm*)*, Lille, Palais des Beaux-Arts.*
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS / HERVÉ LEWANDOWSKI

FIGURE 47   *Augustin Pajou*, Madame de Wailly, *1789, marble, h. 62.2 cm* (*with base: 76.8 cm*)*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.*
IMAGE: © THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

that are unknown, by 1799 the marble bust of Charles de Wailly, who passed away one year earlier, was no longer in the possession of his wife, who nevertheless retained her own portrait.[37] Still, the private nature of the bust of Charles de Wailly can be deduced from its design. The architect is represented in a straightforward manner: his neck is almost bare, and his open fur-collared jacket reveals a shirt with a ruffled edge, while his face is expressive of a strong, curious, good-humored character. As Guilhem Scherf rightfully observes: "The empathy between an artist and his sitter has seldom been so evident as in this intimate portrait."[38] Bearing in mind Pajou's friendship with the couple, it is tempting to read these pendant busts as a statement regarding their personal family life. The opposing formulae employed for the representation of the two sitters, who are portrayed turning slightly towards each other, are striking: Charles de Wailly's bust is sober and discreet in conception; his outfit, warm gesture, realistically portrayed face, and frank expression are those of a worldly, contemporary man. Considering the pendant character of the portrait, the forward inclination of de Wailly's head and chest portrays him as a modest and admiring husband. His wife's portrait, by contrast, is grandiose and showy. Designed *à l'antique*, it is characterized by a solid and erect body, an idealized face with a proud and reserved expression, a partly exposed torso, and clinging drapery inspired by Roman sculpture. In this manner, Pajou presented a model of conjugality in which the man is portrayed as accessible and sensitive, while the woman is perceived as an ideal figure admired by the husband.

Pajou's portrayal of Monsieur and Madame de Wailly, however, was far from conventional: In most pendant busts of married couples, the husband's head was slightly elevated and his gaze directed forward, while the wife's expression was more modest, and her face slightly turned towards the image of her husband.[39] This conventional formula reflected traditional family values, portraying the man as the admired and powerful spouse and the representative of the family's lineage. In the case of the de Wailly busts, however, the opposite is suggested: the wife represents the family's solid, enduring, and respected

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37   Guilhem Scherf quotes Madame de Wally referring to the original bust of her husband in a letter written by her in 1799: "if only I had the marble one." In Allard et al., *Citizens and Kings*, 361.

38   Ibid.

39   See Pajou's own pendant portraits of the Andouillé couple (1778–9, private collection) and of the Aved couple (1763–4, private collection), illustrated and discussed in Draper and Scherf, *Augustin Pajou*, 248–250; Pajou breaks with this formula when his friends are in question: see, in addition to the de Wailly couple, the portraits of the Sedaine couple (*Michel-Jean Sedaine*, 1775, London, Victoria and Albert Museum; *Madame Sedaine*, 1781, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts).

character, while her husband's gaze and tenderly smiling face, which is turned to the left—where her portrait was to be placed—radiate his admiration for her. The subversive nature of this arrangement, which reflects the changing perception of the family during this period, might be attributed not merely to Pajou's originality as an artist but also to de Wailly himself, who probably designed the busts together with his colleague and friend. This supposition is reinforced by the message delivered in a later painted portrait of Charles de Wailly by the female painter Marguerite Gérard (fig. 48). Gérard created a work that subverted the established convention for portraying sculpted busts in painted portraits: such busts, which were placed, as in Gérard's composition, in an elevated position in relation to the depicted sitter, usually represented an inspirational figure in the life of the main sitter. When a respectable woman was portrayed, the bust would typically represent her husband (whose image appeared as a commemorative one if he was no longer alive) or the French

FIGURE 48   *Marguerite Gérard*, Charles de Wailly with the
             Bust of His Wife, *1789–1798, oil on wood, 24.7 × 19.3
             cm, private collection.*
             WORK IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

king, whose image functioned as a patriarchal symbol; when a male sitter was depicted, the bust would have usually portrayed an ancient philosopher or a celebrated contemporary intellectual. This formula is also employed in the painted portrait of de Wailly; in this case, however, the venerated figure represented by the portrait bust in the painting is the sitter's own wife. Gérard located Pajou's portrait of Madame de Wailly (who was still alive at that time and could have been painted in person rather than as a symbol) in an elevated spot within the composition; her representation in a manner associated with philosophers and authoritative figures casts her as a virtuous and venerated individual, and as a source of inspiration for the head of an ideal family who is, by implication, also a virtuous citizen.

In Pajou's double portrait, Madame de Wailly is the subject of her husband's admiring gaze, yet—as is always the case, especially with sculpture—she is simultaneously subjected to the viewer's gaze. The male observer is invited to identify himself with Charles de Wailly, thus becoming part of a new family configuration in which the old conventions are reversed: The woman is repositioned as the central figure in the family, and her role as a wife and mother is emphasized by the partial exposure of her breast; the man, meanwhile, is redefined as a natural, simple individual whose status and success are determined by his wife's virtuous character. This reformulation of the conjugal relationship presents it as an arrangement based on love, friendship and mutual respect. In Gérard's painted portrait, the viewer's role in recognizing this new family structure is made explicit: Both Madame de Wailly and her husband gaze out at the viewer, thus making clear that their redefined roles exceed the limits of their personal relationship and extend into the larger social and cultural sphere occupied by the viewer. Pajou and Gérard's works thus both demonstrate how the portrait bust transcends its status as an artistic object to define a conceptual space in which the sitter, the beholder, and the artist come together to participate in the shaping of new philosophical concepts and cultural ideals whose significance extends beyond the private sphere represented in the artwork to French society and culture as a whole.

Despite Pajou's exposure of Madame de Wailly's bosom, which emphasizes her maternal and nurturing role, it is her husband the architect who is presented as a tender and warm figure. Whereas she appears solid and solemn, he is slightly inclined, with his head leaning forward in a sympathetic gesture. He is smiling tenderly, and his realistically represented, natural face conveys the sincerity, softness and accessibility of a sensitive caregiver. Contemporary genre paintings similarly reveal how the crisis of masculine authority in France gave rise to a new image of men as devoted fathers. Greuze's celebrated genre scenes, with their moralizing focus on fallen paternal authority, were

paralleled by Etienne Aubry's paintings, which formulated a new image of men as loving and emotional husbands and fathers, and whose work was equally important in propagating the new maternal ideal. Aubry's painting *Paternal Love*, which was exhibited in the Salon of 1775 (Birmingham, UK, The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham), features three generations of the same family gathered around a humble hearth, forming an image of domestic happiness in a modest setting. The painting was praised both for its naturalism and for its positive influence as a 'moral genre.' Such a Rousseauian domestic scene, which depicted a loving husband who provides for his wife and three admiring sons and supports his widowed father, was perceived as an implicit critique of the dissolute upper classes, and as a means of promoting a new and virtuous type of manhood. Despite the fact that the woman is placed at the center of the composition in accordance with Rousseau's conception of the family, the man is the one receiving the attention and affection of his children, as well as of the viewer. The presence of the man's father, who is the only standing figure in the composition, defines him as a good son, while reiterating the family's patriarchal structure; the man's body faces the center of the scene where his wife is seated, stressing his role as a loving husband; his warm smile, the orientation of his body, and his outstretched arms, meanwhile, all testify to his devotion and tenderness as a father.

The question of authority, as depicted by Aubry, is a particularly interesting one. Both parents seem to be loved and admired by their children, yet neither one of them constitutes a clearcut symbol of authority, nor is this role attributed to the grandfather. Aubry's portrayal of this family depicts a marriage between equals, in which both partners share the responsibility for their family's success and happiness, while jointly wielding their parental authority. The traditional depiction of an authoritative masculine figure is thus replaced by an image of mutual love and respect between a gentler, more natural man and a sensitive and maternal woman. These model figures, together with the ideal of providing one's children with greater freedom, bred family portraits that increasingly portrayed informal and intimate scenes, while inevitably eroding masculine authority. This new valorization of self-awareness and of the expression of emotion as a form of virtue was an intrinsic part of the cult of sensibility celebrated by Rousseau in *Émile*:

> You hope to be a husband and a father; have you seriously considered your duties? When you become the head of a family you will become a citizen of your country.[40]

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40   Rousseau, *Émile* (2009), 914.

The sensitive father and husband thus also emblemized moral well-being and model citizenship.

The medium of painting, as the above analysis reveals, facilitated the combination of the traditional image of male authority with the novel image of the sensitive father and husband. Painted portraits of socially prominent men often represented them standing in a dominant position within the composition, while incorporating into the scene symbols representative of emotion and of the family, such as the wife seated besides the man, a love letter, a volume of Rousseau's writings, or even the sitter's children. Such is the case, for instance, in François Gérard's painting of the celebrated miniaturist Jean-Baptiste Isabey and his daughter Alexandrine (fig. 49).[41] The two are depicted

FIGURE 49   *François Gérard*, Jean-Baptiste Isabey et sa fille Alexandrine, *1795, oil on canvas, 195 × 130 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.* IMAGE: © MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, DIST. RMN-GRAND PALAIS / ANGÈLE DEQUIER

41   Allard et al., *Citizens and Kings*, no. 89, 322–323.

in their apartments at the Louvre, about to descend to the gardens glimpsed on the right-hand side of the composition. Isabey, who was part of an exclusive intellectual and social milieu, is portrayed in an elegant and sophisticated manner. Despite the informal and intimate nature of this portrait, he is wearing the smart, fashionable coat of a respected gentleman, with an elaborately arranged cravat and tasseled riding boots. This solemn image is reinforced by the presence of a gun dog in the background, which is depicted looking up affectionately at his master. Significantly, Gérard does not include the familiar emblems of Isabey's profession in this portrait, choosing instead to present and define him through an emphasis on his paternal role. His solid, erect figure and austere appearance are imbued with a sense of authority that is amplified by the presence of his daughter and their positioning in relation to one another; at the same time, this authority is downplayed by the father and daughter's joint hands, which charge the image with a soft and gentle quality.

Like the female busts discussed in Chapter 2, busts of men could not accommodate the explicit portrayal of children in order to refer to the sitter's parental role. Yet whereas busts of women incorporated the formula of the exposed breast and smile as an allusion to breastfeeding and to the happiness gained by the fulfillment of maternal duties, the representation of men posed a greater challenge. For although the smile motif was familiar to viewers as a symbol of familial and parental happiness, sincerity, and accessibility, its employment outside a familial or intellectual framework, as we have learnt from Diderot's response to the smiling image of Clermont-Tonnerre, was perceived as problematic. The sensitive character portrayed in such images was read as coming at the expense of authority, and was thus ambivalently received.

The discounting of patriarchal authority within the family; the downplaying of dynastic concerns and, to a certain extent, of social status; the growth and strengthening of the middle-class, the rise of individualism and the simultaneous formation of a new public consciousness, and, finally, the unprecedented extent of explicit political criticism and its propagation in private salons resulted in a crisis that extended far beyond the unit of the family. Having emerged in the private domain due to the changes in family structure, the crisis of masculinity also carried a public significance that affected the French social order and contributed to the greatest political crisis in French history. So that while the eruption of the French Revolution is not directly addressed in this study, an examination of these busts cannot be complete without relating to this larger political context. The privileging of simplicity and tenderness over grandeur and severity, as given expression in the cultural reformulation of masculinity, was perceived as a challenge to the order governing French society as a whole, and as undermining the public image of the country's aris-

tocracy and of French royalty. In an intellectual climate that promoted individualism and equality, the legitimacy of absolute monarchy was questioned: the king, who was traditionally perceived as the father of the nation, was now expected to embody the qualities of a gentle father, and to be tender and accessible. Furthermore, the fallen authority of the *pater familias* reflected the fallen authority of the king. As this association makes clear, the ambivalent message transmitted in male portrait busts also carried a political message that extended beyond the sphere of the restructured family to the rethinking and reorganization of the social and political order. While the representation of the actual king will be discussed at length in the following chapter, a brief discussion of sculptural images representing members of the aristocracy can contribute to an understanding of how the cultural crisis of masculinity and the fallen authority of paternal figures contributed to the country's complex political situation.

The four busts discussed in the first part of this chapter, which represent French aristocrats of the time, clearly place the sitter in a military context. Louis-Philippe de Ségur, Gaspard de Clermont-Tonnerre, Maurice de Saxe, and even Gilbert du Motier de Lafayette, whose portrait seems to assume a more intellectual air, all sought to be percieved as authoritative figures. The inclusion of softer motifs, which was aimed to a greater or lesser extent at formulaitng a more tender type of manhood, resulted in a confusing message concerning masculine identity. On the eve of the French Revolution, the aristocracy's difficulty to dismiss symbols of power and authority is understandable. Still, in some cases, authoritative motifs and attributes were also renounced in portraits of aristocrats in order to create a private, familial image of a warm and sensitive individual. One such bust is the portrait of Alexis-Jean-Eustache Taitbout, which was executed by Jean-Jacques Caffieri in 1762 (fig. 50).[42] Caffieri's simple, informal design is clear and coherent, featuring a smile and warm facial expression and avoiding a glorified or elegant costume, even though the sitter's remarkable military record could have easily been portrayed as part of a powerful, virile image. Taitbout was an aristocrat, a knight of the Ordre de Saint-Lazare, and a Belgian military leader who served as the French general consul to Naples. Despite his impressive achievements, however, this bust underscores his warmth and humanity. Taitbout's head turns to the right in a spontaneous movement; a relaxed smile softens his bulbous features, and his eyes seem to sparkle with life. The realist depiction of his physiognomy—his prominent nose, furrowed forehead, bushy eyebrows, and soft, aging flesh—suggest a sympathetic disposition. To further enhance the bust's

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42   On this bust, see Bückling and Scherf, *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, 181–182.

FIGURE 50   *Jean-Jacques Caffieri*, Bust of
Alexis-Jean-Eustache Taitbout, *1762, terracotta on
plaster base, h. 48 cm (with base: 64.5 cm), Los
Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum.*
DIGITAL IMAGE COURTESY OF THE GETTY'S OPEN
CONTENT PROGRAM

informal character, Caffieri modeled it in terracotta, taking advantage of this
medium's malleability to create a spontaneous image and leaving the surface
intentionally rough; he chose to represent Taitbout as one of the *philosophes*,
outfitting him in the loose, partly open blouse worn by writers and often also
by artists. The intimate and psychologically penetrating quality of this bust
redefines masculinity as *sensible*, rather than *powerful*. Caffieri's portrait, and
others of the same type, thus extended the reformulation of the masculine
image beyond the private sphere into the public sphere in which such images
were exhibited, further encouraging the dismissal of patriarchal authority in
favor of a sensitive and warm ideal of masculinity, even at the risk of affecting
the image of the monarchy and the aristocracy.

   In conclusion it is worth noting one other representational formula, which
consisted of a bare-chested bust *à l'antique*, and which was used to accom-
modate sitters who wished neither to embrace a sympathetic and accessible
paternal image, nor to be seen as authoritative figures. This formula, which
was discussed in Chapter 1 and was most prominently employed in images
of philosophers, was also applied to 'ordinary' male sitters in order to under-
score their intellectual character. Its use in this context served to neutralize, to
some extent, the personal essence of the portrait, transforming it into a moral

statement concerning the ideal and virtuous nature of contemporary French identity. Jean-Baptiste Pigalle, who is best known for his large-scale monuments, also executed a number of busts (including the portrait of Madame de Pompadour discussed in chapter two), chiefly of intellectuals. The majority of these busts did not represent courtiers, but rather colleagues who were often his friends, and with whom Pigalle felt a certain affinity. In 1760–1761, Pigalle traveled to Orléans, where he took the opportunity to create a portrait bust of his friend the connoisseur, man of letters, and artist Thomas-Aignan Desfriches (fig. 51).[43] The physiognomy of this sitter, which is characterized by naturalist features, delicately worked flesh, and heavy-lidded eyes, resembles that of Pigalle's later self-portrait (Paris, Musée du Louvre). Pigalle avoided all displays

FIGURE 51   *Jean-Baptiste Pigalle*, Thomas-Aignan Desfriches, *1760–1, terracotta, h. 50 cm, Orléans, Musée des Beaux-Arts.*
IMAGE: © MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS D'ORLÉANS, PHOTOGRAPHER: FRANÇOIS LAUGINIE

43   Scherf, *Houdon, 1741–1828*, no. 18, 52–53.

of virtuosity; the neck and shoulders are treated with sobriety, and the face too is sober, unsmiling, and somewhat tense. Due to its sensitive and natural air, this bust is considered to be one of Pigalle's masterpieces.

While the use of the *à l'antique* formula creates a clear association between Desfriches and the milieu of philosophers, this artistic choice also underscores his simple character. Yet although this portrait contains no signs of power, it cannot be construed as undermining masculine authority, since the bare chest detaches the image from any particular historical or social context. Desfriches, who was known as amiable and erudite, is presented by Pigalle in his most natural and thus vulnerable state. By placing the sitter in a conceptual sphere removed from that of contemporary life, Pigalle avoids the need to struggle with the ambivalence inherent to the other representational formulas discussed above. At the same time, as in the case of contemporary philosophers, the chosen formula privileges the concept of interiority through an emphasis on sobriety, sensitivity, and introversion, and on the ideals of self-exploration and self-exposure. Despite the marked differences between these representational formulae, heterogeneous images of masculinity nevertheless shared a common concern with the concept of 'nature' at a time when it came to be perceived as a moral prerogative: virtuous fatherhood in the Rousseauian spirit was recognized as the realization of natural familial relationships, while also implying virtuous citizenship; the ideals of self-exploration and self-exposure were similarly seen as a manifestations of one's 'natural' essence; and nudity combined with particular rather than ideal features was similarly associated with simplicity, introspection, and a natural existence, rather than merely with a classicizing style.

The correlation between nudity and the crisis of masculinity has drawn a substantial amount of scholarly attention. Discussing the male nude figure in the context of the French Revolution, Abigail Solomon-Godeau suggests reading classicizing nudity, as well as tender and sensitive representations of men, as bespeaking an androgynous perception of masculinity.[44] In recognizing the feminine traits appropriated by men, her thesis follows upon the earlier study of Alex Potts, who argues that the period's male nude body represented an ideal persona (and sexuality) deprived of gender affiliation: "the ideal male body takes over the whole panorama of ideal selfhood in a radically

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44   Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Male trouble: A Crisis in Representation* (New York and London, 1997); and idem, "The Other Side of Vertu: Alternative Masculinities in the Crucible of Revolution," *Art Journal* 56 (1997): 55–61.

short-circuited economy of identity and desire."[45] Applying these arguments to Pigalle's bust of Desfriches might provide an additional interpretation of the bare-chested, *à l'antique* formula in this and other portrait busts during this period. In addition to my interpretation of classicizing nudity as a symbol of self-exposure and natural existence, Desfriches' portrait can be read as a manifestation of reformed masculinity: intimate, soft, sensitive and therefore feminine in nature. Both male and female viewers could thus identify with this model of representation, which applied not only to male individuals and by extension to French society as a whole, but also to a gender-free concept of a virtuous French citizen. Bare-chested male busts may therefore be interpreted as polysemic images composed of several (sometimes contradictory) social functions, while embodying a cluster of contemporary ideas central to the definition of the modern self.

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45   Alex Potts, "Beautiful Bodies and Dying Heroes: Images of Ideal Manhood in the French Revolution," *History Workshop* 30 (1990): 16.

The Face of the Monarchy: Court Propaganda and the Portrait Bust

The father and the king are, the one and the other, living images of God whose empire is founded on love. *Nature has made fathers for the advantage of children. Society has made kings for the happiness of the people.*[1]

In the preceding chapter, I examined the crisis of masculinity in eighteenth-century art and culture and the related erosion of patriarchal authority, as delineated in the portrait bust. Considering the French king's traditional and historical status as 'the father of the French people,' a treatment of this crisis cannot be complete without an examination of the monarchical image during this period. In the second chapter, I discussed an official bust of Queen Marie-Antoinette, showing how the ideal of maternal pleasure had permeated the royal court and transformed the representation of the royal family: Marie-Antoinette's portraits were softer and more humane than those of her predecessors, while embodying the new dual ideal of eroticism and motherhood. Could the male ruler of France's unstable absolute monarchy similarly present himself in accordance with the new perception of masculinity, which embraced an ethos of good fatherhood while pointing to a crisis of paternal authority?

This chapter aims to examine the transformation of the image of the French king under the ancien régime, beginning with the reign of Louis XIV—the epitome of absolute monarchy—and ending with the reign of Louis XVI and the fall of the House of Bourbon. I will analyze several portrait busts of French sovereigns, including Louis XIV's most famous portrait, which was created by Gian-Lorenzo Bernini, Louis XV's official portrait by Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, and two contrasting representations of Louis XVI by Louis-Pierre Deseine and Jean-Antoine Houdon. The dialectic relations between the public and private spheres, which are central to Enlightenment culture, will be further elaborated upon through an analysis of porcelain busts of Louis XV and Louis XVI, which were created as public images to be exhibited in the private domain.

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1 Unknown author, "Paternal Love," in *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project.* For the French, see "Amour paternel," in *Encyclopédie,* eds. Diderot & d'Alembert, 1:370.

In doing so, I examine whether the French monarchy had embraced the sub-
versive public view of the king as an individual person rather than as a divine
entity, and probe how images of the monarch negotiated the new ambivalence
characteristic of masculine imagery and the related crisis of paternal authority
while avoiding representations that would further weaken the monarchy.

Born in 1638, Louis XIV, known as Louis the Great or the Sun King, ruled
as King of France and Navarre from 1643 until his death in 1715. He was the
longest-reigning king in European history, ruling for over seventy-two years.
Louis XIV effectively assumed power in 1661, after the death of his chief minis-
ter, Cardinal Mazarin. He was an adherent of the theory of the divine right of
kings, which upheld the divine origin of a monarchial rule limited by no tem-
poral restraints. Louis XIV followed in the footsteps of his predecessors, who
had embarked on the creation of a centralized state governed from the capital
while working to eliminate the remnants of feudalism that persisted in parts of
France. By compelling a significant part of the noble elite to inhabit his lavish
palace in Versailles, he succeeded in pacifying the French aristocracy, which
was constrained to give up a large amount of power and financial income due
to the court's strategies of centralization.[2] These strategies supported a system
of absolute monarchical rule that endured until the outbreak of the French
Revolution. During the reign of Louis XIV, France was the leading European
power: Louis XIV encouraged, and benefited from, the work of prominent polit-
ical, military, and cultural figures such as the politicians Mazarin and Colbert,
the French marshals Turenne and Vauban, the writers Molière, Racine, Boileau,
and La Fontaine, the composer Lully, the artists Le Brun and Rigaud, the theo-
logians Bossuet and Fénelon, and the architects Le Vau, Mansart, Perrault, and
Le Nôtre.[3]

One of the most celebrated sculptural images of Louis XIV, which came
to serve as an artistic model, was executed by Gian-Lorenzo Bernini in 1665
(fig. 52).[4] In 1665, the esteemed Italian sculptor accepted the Sun King's invita-
tion to come to France and work on a new project for the royal residence at the
Louvre. Following his arrival in Paris, Bernini was officially commissioned to

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2   William Beik, "The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration," *Past & Present* 188
(2005): 195–224.

3   On various aspects of culture as promoted by Louis XIV, see David Lee Rubin, ed., *Sun King:
The Ascendancy of French Culture during the Reign of Louis XIV* (Washington, 1992).

4   The bibliography on this bust is very extensive. The most complete study of the bust is still:
Rudolph Wittkower, *Bernini's bust of Louis XIV* (London, 1951). See also Bacchi, Hess, and
Montagu, *Bernini and the Birth of Baroque Portrait Sculpture*, 266–269, although referring to
the bronze cast in the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

FIGURE 52   *Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, Louis XIV, *1665, marble, h. 96 cm,*
Versailles, Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de
Trianon.
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES) /
GÉRARD BLOT

execute the king's bust. Thanks to the diary written by Paul Fréart de Chantelou, every step in the creation of this marble portrait is known.[5] On July 14, after having made several drawings of the king's features, Bernini began sculpting the marble bust. He had been afforded twelve sittings with the king to perfect the marble carving; the last one, in which he sculpted the eyes, took place on October 5. The bust was first displayed in the Louvre and then in Versailles, where the king moved in 1682, and where it remains to date. Chantelou quoted several remarks concerning this portrait, which praised Bernini for choosing to "bring out the qualities of a hero as well as make a good likeness."[6] Many

5   Paul Fréart de Chantelou, *Diary of the Cavaliere Bernini's Visit to France* (1665), eds. Anthony Blunt and George C. Bauer (Princeton, 1985).

6   Ibid., 89.

Parisian viewers remarked that "the King looked as if he were giving a military command," adding that, "though it had neither arms nor legs, it seemed to move and walk."[7] Bernini had even joked that "if the King wished to come more often, the portrait would not only resemble him, it would speak."[8]

This bust constituted the ultimate representation of the absolute monarch as a divine entity. The king's head is elevated, and his gaze is directed high and far to the horizon, alluding to his mythological image as the sun.[9] His entire posture expresses supremacy and pride. Louis XIV's right arm and left shoulder reveal him to be clad in magnificent armor, which alludes to France's military strength while casting the sitter as the powerful and victorious descendent of glorified ancestors from antiquity. His splendid wig and elaborate collar amplify his glory, as does the dynamic drapery surrounding the bust, whose diagonal thrust is underscored by the turn of the head in the opposite direction. This dynamic composition, which was characteristic of the Baroque, enhanced the pompous image of the king, and served as a source of inspiration for Louis XIV's later series of busts by Antoine Coysevox. The exaggerated indentations in the marble, which Bernini created to simulate the effect of light and shade, further intensify the sense of drama. The fluttering, elevated cloth at the bottom of the bust symbolizes the king's paternal character by evoking traditional religious images of saints hoisting up their mantle in order to shelter and protect the people (a motif that was also used by Bernini in his earlier portrait of Francesco I d'Este, Duke of Modena). In Louis XIV's bust, this divine aura is created by the extreme elevation of the head, the intense diagonal thrust, and the proud facial expression reflective of Louis's ideology. In this sense, one may also appreciate the function of the portrait bust as a means of political propaganda.

During the reign of Louis XIV, the central government possessed absolute power, and the paternal character of the French monarchy was promoted by the leading theologians of the court. As Louis XIV stated in his *Mémoires*: "It was God's will that the subject should obey without discrimination."[10] Originally, the king's *Mémoires* were not written for the public, but rather for the Dauphin's own exclusive use. Nevertheless, this motto and its underlying ideology were propagated by means of sponsored books, newspapers and

7   Ibid., 125 and 182 respectively.

8   Ibid., 131.

9   Peter Burke, "The Demise of Royal Mythologies," in *Iconography, Propaganda, and Legitimation*, ed. Allan Ellenius (Oxford, 199 8), 245–254.

10 Quoted in Kingsley Martin, *French Liberal Thought in the Eighteenth Century: A Study of Political Ideas from Bayle to Condorcet*, (London, 1963, 3rd edn.), 26.

pamphlets.[11] The most prominent theologian at the French court, the Bishop Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, defined Louis XIV as a divine entity and described the monarchy as sacred, paternal, absolute, and subject to reason.[12] These royal attributes, which were ritually reaffirmed in public celebrations, were also reiterated by means of the court's propaganda tools, including sculpted portraits. During Louis XIV's reign, the public image of the king gained new importance due to the emergence of a public sphere that, for the first time in early modern history, transformed the people into a self-conscious body. This development gave rise to a subversive political discourse entertained by a critical public, which had to be pleased and satisfied by the court.

The image communicated by the king's portraits was merely one aspect of the court's response to the cultural phenomenon known today as the rise of public opinion or, as Jürgen Habermas calls it, a "political tribunal."[13] While an extensive survey of this development far exceeds the limits of the current study, a brief discussion of it is essential for an understanding of the royal bust's operation during the turbulent period extending from the end of Louis XIV's rule to the French Revolution. The term 'public opinion' was first mentioned in French writings towards the end of Louis XIV's reign. Paradoxically, as Peter Burke notes, the official fabrication of Louis XIV's image, which acknowledged the conscious reading of monarchic texts and images by French citizens and recognized their dynamic capacity to create a virtual image of the ruler, made an important contribution to the formation of public opinion in France through its stimulation of political discourse and the unintentional advancement of critical political thought.[14] The gradual unfolding of this process in France during the eighteenth century is thus a key element in understanding the evolution of the court's public-relations efforts, and the related use of art

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11   Joseph Klaits, *Printed Propaganda under Louis XIV: Absolute Monarchy and Public Opinion* (Princeton, 1976).

12   Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Politique tirée des propres paroles de l'écriture sainte* (written: 1679, first published: Paris, 1708), ed. Jacques Le Brun (Genève, 1967), book III.

13   Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 100; See also Hans Speier, "The Rise of Public Opinion," in *Propaganda and Communication in World History*, eds. Harold Lasswell, Daniel Lerner, and Hans Speier (Honolulu, 1980), vol. 2, 147–167; Keith Michael Baker, "Public Opinion as Political Invention," in *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1990), 167–199; Anthony J. La Vopa, "The Birth of Public Opinion," *The Wilson Quarterly* 15 (1991): 46–55, and idem, "Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe," (review article), *The Journal of Modern History* 64 (1992): 79–116; Ursula Haskins Gonthier, ed., *Opinion, Voltaire, nature et culture* (Oxford, 2007).

14   Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven and London, 1992), 152.

and of portrait busts in particular. Pointing to the power of public opinion, Louis-Sebastien Mercier stated in his famous *Tableau de Paris*, published in the early 1780s, that:

> In the past thirty years a great and important revolution in our ideas has occurred. Public opinion has today a preponderate and irresistible force in Europe.[15]

Art naturally became a central player in influencing public opinion through the visual image of the court. The official portraits of the king and, more specifically, portrait busts, which were easily replicated and displayed in both public and private spaces, constituted a propaganda tool designed to serve the interests of the court. Yet this new political approach to shaping public opinion inevitably strengthened forces oppositional to the government, as—to use Keith Baker's words—authority was transferred, during the eighteenth century, "from the public person of the sovereign to the sovereign person of the public."[16]

The sublime nature of the French king was already challenged towards the end of Louis XIV's rule.[17] The first signs of the forthcoming shift in political thought can be recognized in the art and literature created at the turn of the seventeenth century, when intellectual discourse, including texts written at the French royal court itself, began to contain direct criticism of the once untouchable monarch. In 1699, the celebrated theologian and writer François Fénelon, who was appointed in 1689 as tutor to Louis XIV's grandson, published his most famous and subversive literary work, *Les Aventures de Télémaque.* This novel, which tells the story of the political and moral tutoring of the young Telemachus as he prepares to succeed his father Ulysses as king of Ithaca, was a biting attack on the divine right of absolute monarchy. In it, Fénelon implied that Louis XIV's attempts to enhance his own grandeur had destroyed the foundations of actual greatness. As Idomeneus, king of Crete, tells Mentor, the prince's tutor:

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15   Louis-Sebastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris* (1782), ed. Jean-Claude Bonnet (Paris, 1994), vol. 1, 972.

16   Keith Michael Baker, "Public Opinion as Political Invention," 172; see also Mona Ozouf, "L'opinion publique," in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, ed. Keith Michael Baker, (Oxford, 1987), vol. 1, 419–434.

17   Jeffrey W. Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, 1990); Jay Caplan, *In the King's Wake: Post-Absolutist Culture in France* (Chicago, 1999).

> For you have taught me that a true king ought to consider himself as made for the good of his people, as bound to devote himself entirely to their service, and to prefer their safety to his own reputation.[18]

The book, which was published right after Fénelon was banished from Versailles due to another controversy, enraged Louis XIV. This fact, however, did little to detract from the popularity of this novel, which was republished and translated into several languages, inspiring the great thinkers of the eighteenth century not only in France but also in England, Germany, and revolutionary America.

The decline of the sublime image of the monarchy and the shift in the perception of French sovereignty is wittily conveyed in Jean-Antoine Watteau's famous self-commissioned painting *L'Enseigne de Gersaint* (Gersaint's Shopsign), painted in 1720 (Berlin, Schloss Charlottenburg), which was created to hang outside the shop of his friend, the Parisian art dealer Edme-François Gersaint. Portraying Gersaint's shop as a site where French sociability is being practiced, Watteau humorously refers to the French king and to his conceptual status in the shop, ironically named *Au Grand Monarque*. On the far left side of the composition, a simple worker is packing a portrait of Louis XIV in a box that is about to be sent away. Whether it is destined for a customer or for the basement, its handling as an object, its ridiculous horizontal presentation, and its insinuation of royal mortality express the ideological shift in the public perception of the monarch.[19] The idea of royal mortality brings to mind the unusual bust of Louis XIV that was created in 1705 by Antoine Benoist, and which, after its execution, was condemned by the king for its overtly natural, and thus mortal, quality (Versailles, Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon).[20] This wax bas-relief, which was colored and adorned with a real wig and clothes, displayed the king's ravaged face with an almost cruel accuracy. The real, rather than sculpted, accessories implicitly undermine the king's divine status, placing him instead in a concrete, worldly sphere. This portrait reveals the growing artistic tendency towards verisimilitude, truth and naturalism, while underscoring the shift in the representation of the French monarch. Even regardless of Watteau's mischievous presentation of the king, Benoist's portrait epitomizes the transition from allegorical images of Louis XIV that were associated

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18   François Fénelon, *Telemachus, son of Ulysses*, ed. and trans. Patrick Riley (Cambridge and New York, 1994), 153.

19   Mary Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art, Literature and Talk in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven and London, 1992); Caplan, *In the King's Wake*, 75–98.

20   Hoog, *Musée national du Château de Versialles*, no. 1089, 240.

with antiquity and Classical mythology to ones that were tangible and direct. The effects of this representational shift were made evident in the last decade of the seventeenth century, when the French government sought to mitigate it through a significant investment in medals, equestrian statues, and tapestries bearing idealized representations of Louis XIV as a youthful, dynamic, and powerful ruler. Nevertheless, while the genre of the portrait bust laid an increasing emphasis on verisimilitude, the king's declining health caused him not only to withdraw from public view, but also to avoid sitting for his royal sculptors, whose works would have continued to downplay his sublime image.

   The impact of the Glorious Revolution and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in England in 1688 must also be noted in this context. Parallel to the growing secularization of French society, which challenged the divine image of the king, the questioning of the legitimacy of an absolute monarchy had profoundly influenced French political thinkers. By the time Louis XV came to rule, those responsible for the court's ideology and public image had to take into consideration the dissenting voices heard outside the court. The political writings of Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Diderot referred to the shift in English politics as a role model. With this model in mind, Montesquieu's popular book *Lettres persanes*, which was published in 1721, expressed his understanding that the authorities to whom he pays obedience might be unworthy of his reverence. In the twenty-fourth letter, Rica says:

> This prince is, besides, a great magician; he exercises his empire even over the minds of his subjects, and makes them think as he pleases. If he has but only a thousand crowns in his treasury, and has occasion for two, he needs only tell them that one crown is worth two, and they believe it. If he has a difficult war to maintain, and has no money, he has only to put it into their heads that a piece of paper is money, and they are presently convinced of the truth of it. He even goes so far as to make them believe that he can cure them of all kinds of evils by touching them; so great is the power and influence which he has over their minds.[21]

Pointing to the wrongful character of the king's behavior and to the people's right to express their criticism, such publications prompted a growing public desire for a king who would be devoted to his people and aware of his duty to serve the country.

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21   Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, in *The Complete Works of M. de Montesquieu* (London, 1777), vol. 3, 245.

Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne's portrait bust of Louis xv (fig. 53) seems to address these public concerns by offering a newly formulated image of the king.[22] Commissioned in 1757 by Madame de Pompadour for her Château de Champs and exhibited at the Salon that same year, this bust displays a relatively simple image of the French king. At the general sale that took place following the death of Madame de Pompadour in 1764, this bust was bought by the king himself. It was subsequently presented to Monsieur de Laverdy, *contrôleur général des finances*, who placed it at the Château de Neuville, his residence in Gambais, near Paris. This was not Lemoyne's only portrait of Louis xv: The production of official sculpted and painted portraits of the king was a continuous concern of the *Bâtiments du Roi*. Portraits were needed not only for royal residences, but also as gifts to foreign diplomats, for favorite courtiers and friends, for public buildings in Paris and the provinces, and for offices or embassies. From 1732 to 1774, Lemoyne created a new and updated official portrait of the sovereign every few years. After completing the original bust, which was

FIGURE 53   *Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne*, Bust of Louis xv, *1757, marble, h. 77.5 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.*
IMAGE: © THE METRO-
POLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

22   On this bust, see Raggio, "Two Great Portraits by Lemoyne and Pigalle"; Wardropper, *European Sculpture, 1400–1900*, no. 61, 178–179.

usually made for the king, Lemoyne would create a plaster cast that was used to produce marble and bronze replicas and served as a model for engravings.

While Lemoyne's portrait of Louis XV may seem at first sight to be a traditional representation characterized by the dynamism of earlier Baroque sculpture, it represents in fact a new artistic formula. This formula, which resembles one discussed in the previous chapter, is composed of two different sets of representational conventions: the first, which shaped the lower half of the bust, portrays the sitter's chest, drapery and accessories in a manner that conveys supremacy; the second set of conventions, which shaped the depiction of the head, conveys an image of humility, sensitivity, and even compassion. The turn of the head and the dynamic drapery imbue the bust with a sense of movement and vitality, while the torso, which symbolizes the nation and the monarchy, is majestic and bedecked with royal, national, and military decorations, and the right shoulder, seen through the folds of the cape, is covered by a shield. Nevertheless, the degree of extravagance in these busts is considerably diminished in comparison to Louis XIV's portraits, while Louis XV's features reveal the sitter's simple nature: they are humble and humane, representing the person rather than his position. The king's eyes are subdued, and the expression of his mouth is conciliatory—perhaps even revealing a slight smile. The face of the forty-seven-year-old sovereign does not seem to represent a sublime image of an absolute ruler; instead, the fleshy cheeks, slightly sagging eyelids, and wrinkled neck betray the king's age and human nature. While the volume of the bust, which is achieved by means of the fluttering mantle, emblematizes the king's paternal character, the portrayal of his face clearly casts him as an approachable, loving and compassionate sovereign. The artistic formula represented by this portrait thus tells two utterly different stories, the one transmitted by the head and the other by the body. Seen in the context of the male portrait busts discussed in the previous chapter, these changes seem to have been affected by the general shift in the perception of masculinity and fatherhood, and to conform to the reformulation of masculinity in portrait busts of male sitters.[23]

During the second half of the eighteenth century, this artistic representation of an elaborately adorned, majestic bust combined with a humble and humane face appeared in additional busts by other sculptors, as well as in various paintings. A similar combination is evident, for instance, in a later bust of Louis XV sculpted by Étienne Pierre Adrien Gois in 1770, and exhibited today at the Œil-de-boeuf Hall in the Palace of Versailles. Maurice Quentin de La Tour's

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[23]   Jeffrey Merrick, "Fathers and Kings: Patriarchalism and Absolutism in Eighteenth-Century French Politics," in *Order and Disorder under the Ancien Régime* (Newcastle, UK, 2007), 102–123.

painted portrait of Louis XV, which was created in 1748 (fig. 54), similarly conveys this shift. It portrays the king dressed in a shiny armor and carrying the plaque of the Ordre de la Toison d'Or and the *cordon bleu*, while his right arm is covered by a magnificent fur-lined mantle patterned with the *fleur de lis*, the emblem of the House of Bourbon. Like Lemoyne, de La Tour combined an elevated head with sensitive and individualistic facial features. The gentle smile further communicates the king's desire to appear sincere, kind, and approachable. The similarity between Lemoyne and de La Tour's representations is underscored by the half-length format of the painted composition, which parallels the composition of the sculpted bust in terms of the fragmentation of the sitter's body. The tendency towards greater realism and the reduced emphasis on allegorical features in painted portraits of this size have been noted as reflections of a new propaganda campaign undertaken by the court.[24] The status of both

FIGURE 54   *Maurice Quentin de La Tour*, Louis XV, *1748, pastel on paper, Paris, Musée du Louvre.*
IMAGE: © RMN-GRAND PALAIS (MUSÉE DU LOUVRE) / TONY QUERREC

24   Christopher Lloyd, "Portraits of Sovereigns and Heads of State," in *Citizens and Kings*, ed. Allard et al., 63.

Lemoyne's bust and de La Tour's painting as court commissions supports their reading as reflections of royal propaganda, which were clearly not intended to create an image of a weak king. Yet how were such images received and interpreted by eighteenth-century viewers? The answer to this question requires an analysis both of court discourse and of public discourse as it evolved during the reign of Louis XV.

Louis XV was crowned in 1715, at the age of five. He grew up under rather tragic circumstances, having lost both his parents and his older brother to smallpox at the age of two and thus becoming the first in the line of succession to his great-grandfather Louis XIV. Louis XV became an avid and eclectic reader, fond of science and new technologies. Known as *le Bien-Aimé*, he began his reign as a ruler loved by the public. Yet although his crowning was accompanied by great expectations, he ended his reign as one of the most unpopular kings in the history of France. During the 1740s, his popularity steadily declined due to his imposition of high taxes, his numerous mistresses, and his lavish expenditures. In 1748, Louis XV further shocked his people and the rest of Europe by signing the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, in which he agreed to restore all of his military conquests to Austria. He had clearly not inherited the bellicose character of his great-grandfather Louis XIV. This fact, however, was perceived as a sign of weakness, posing a problem that had to be addressed by the court.

Word and image were the main propaganda tools used to shape the public's perception of the monarchy and justify its actions. Royal and national celebrations, press releases published in the official *Gazette*, and grandiose commissions of artworks all served as a show of power. The court strategy for the representation of Louis XV was to stress the king's personal qualities—his gentle soul and his trustworthy character.[25] In his *Pensées detachés*, Denis Diderot referred to the power of art to make an impact on the observer: "Any piece of sculpture or painting must be an expression of great maxim, a lesson for the viewer, otherwise it is silent."[26] What was, then, the 'great maxim' communicated in Lemoyne's portrait of Louis XV?

Lemoyne's bust was commissioned and executed at a time when the criticism of Louis XV's weakness was openly heard on the streets of the French capital. In his *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris sous le règne de Louis XV*, Edmond

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25   Daniel Rabreau elaborates on the new personal image of Louis XV in relation to the renovation of Soufflot's Sainte-Geneviève cathedral: Rabreau, "La basilique Sainte-Geneviève de Soufflot," in *Le Pantheon, Symbole des revolutions: de l'Eglise de la Nation au Temple des grands homes*, ed. Bergdoll, Barry, exh. cat. (Montréal, 1989), 37–96.

26   Denis Diderot, *Pensées détachées sur la peinture, la sculpture, l'architecture et la poésie* (1775–1781) in *Oeuvres esthetiques*, ed. Paul Verniere (Paris, 1968), 765.

Jean-François Barbier mentioned the famous phrase used by the French in order to describe the king following the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle: "Bête comme la paix" (as stupid as peace).[27] Given Louis xv's political choices and actions, he simply could not be represented as a militant and intransigent ruler, since such a propaganda image would have appeared as entirely non-credible and would have been ignored. His people had to be convinced that his actions represented a new ideology derived from the king's calm nature, and intended to serve their well-being. The philosophical call for a peaceful, good-hearted, and just king corresponded to such a revised ideology, whose official values were God, peace, and the people's happiness (the last two derived from the writings of Fénelon). Lemoyne's bust was undoubtedly designed to portray Louis xv as both dignified and powerful. Significantly, Lemoyne was a sculptor known for his sensitive representation of a sitter's personality, and was probably chosen for the execution of this portrait for that precise reason. The appreciation of his contemporaries for his talent is reflected by the following comment, which appears in Grimm's *Correspondence*:

> No sculptor could design a bust as brilliantly as he, carve it as gracefully, or endow the marble or the clay with an equal measure of life and resemblance.[28]

Lemoyne's representation of Louis xv can thus be interpreted as a subtle act of propaganda aimed at creating a more personal and appealing image of the king.

Unlike Louis xiv, who looked down upon the Parisian public, Louis xv and his circle were well aware of the role of propaganda in the forming and strengthening of public opinion. This official approach, however, had two additional effects that were not necessarily desired by the court: the first was the enhancement of the public's self-awareness of its own power, while the second was the weakening of the king's image due to his relatively gentle and simple portrayal. This problem, however, was not exclusive to the French arena; a related state of affairs existed in England, where the monarchy had been unstable since the mid-seventeenth century, and where republican ideas filled the air, finally taking the form of a constitutional monarchy in 1689 with the issuing of The Bill of Rights, which affirmed parliamentary supremacy. Given the English political

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27   Edmond Jean François Barbier, *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris sous le regne de Louis xv* (Paris, 1963), 203.

28   Quoted in Raggio, "Two Great Portraits by Lemoyne and Pigalle," 220.

influence on the creation of the king's simple, earthly image, it can be assumed
that the French court, as well as the French artists it commissioned, studied
British representations of their sovereign. Considering the English politi-
cal discourse of the time, it would be reasonable to expect such representa-
tions to portray a demotic and kind human being compatible with the new
character of the monarchy and the relatively limited power of the sovereign.
This, indeed, was the representational schema that governed the portrayal of
the king in English busts executed during the period of Louis XV's reign. John
Michael Rysbrack's marble portrait of King George II, who reigned between
1727 and 1760, was created in 1738 (fig. 55), and resembles Louis XV's bust in
terms of its artistic formula.[29] In this bust from 1760, which is a replica of a por-
trait Rysbrack executed in 1738, the king's head is turned slightly to the right;
he wears fantastic armor with a field marshal's scarf, the star of the Garter and,

FIGURE 55   *John Michael Rysbrack*, Bust
of King George II, *1760 after an original
from 1738, marble, h. 89 cm, London, Victoria
and Albert Museum.*
IMAGE: © VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM,
LONDON

29   For this bust, see Diane Bilbey and Marjorie Trusted, eds., *British Sculpture 1470 to 2000:
A Concise Catalogue of the Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London, 2002),
no. 194, 141.

on a ribbon round his neck, the jewel of the Garter; the armor is ornamented with lion-mask pauldrons alluding to the sovereign's Herculean nature and a medusa head, while the torso is elaborate and grandiose and the king's head is crowned with a laurel wreath. The iconography of this portrait, which relates to ancient mythology, was characteristic of royal imagery in Europe throughout the seventeenth century and in the first half of the eighteenth century. It similarly served as a key motif in the mythologization of Louis XIV during the first decades of his reign, and was abandoned in the mid-eighteenth century. At the same time, Rysbrack's design of George II's torso is contrasted by the earthly and sensitive representation of the king's face, whose expression and anatomical features are handled in a naturalistic manner. This representational model parallels the artistic formula employed for Louis XV's portrait.

A further comparison between the portraits of Louis XV and George II reveals an interesting fact: while official portraits of conventional size maintained a relatively solemn appearance, smaller busts, which were produced for private use and were mostly displayed in domestic spaces, often included the motif of the smile. A small porcelain bust of George II (fig. 56), manufactured in 1757–1760, portrays a victorious, yet smiling and humble king. This bust was probably made for exhibition in an entrance hall or other spacious domestic interior—a function that called for a pleasant and appealing representation compatible with the burgeoning domestic ideals of companionship, mutual respect, and happiness. The white soft-paste porcelain bust depicts George II wearing a large wig, with a loose cloak clasped in front over an embossed cuirass; the star of the Order of the Garter is partly concealed by the cloak, while his head is turned towards the left. Despite the magnificent military costume, the head delivers a different message: it is tilted forward, as if bowing to the beholder, while a smile appears on his soft, naturalistically represented face. This image, whose design is representative of other similar cases, thus reveals the British preference for communicative, sympathetic images of the king destined for the domestic sphere.

The French parallel, by contrast, is characterized by the employment of a more rigid representational formula. A porcelain bust of Louis XV (fig. 57) reveals how a formula similar to the one used by Lemoyne was repeated without being further softened. Mounted on an extravagant base, this portrait displays a combination of naturalistic facial features and a majestic torso. The king's head and face are portrayed in a natural manner, without a smile.[30] He is

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30   The head is assumed to have sunk slightly in the small kiln in Mennecy, resulting in a posture that might seem more submissive than originally intended. See "Acquisitions/1984," *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 13 (1985): 179.

FIGURE 56 *Possibly after a plaster bust by John Cheere*, Bust of George II (on a bracket), *1757–60, soft-paste porcelain, h. 39 cm, manufactured by Richard Chaffers Porcelain Factory in Liverpool, London, Victoria and Albert Museum.*
IMAGE: © VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

FIGURE 57 Bust of Louis XV, *possibly Mennecy Porcelain Manufactory, c. 1750–1755, soft-paste porcelain, h. 42.5 cm (including base), Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum.*
DIGITAL IMAGE COURTESY OF THE GETTY'S OPEN CONTENT PROGRAM

wearing a rich wig and elaborate armor with the *cordon bleu* stretching across from his right shoulder, and a mantle visible at the bottom of the chest. Even in such an intimate portrait, which was designed for exhibition in a private, domestic space, the king's victorious image was preferred over a simple and accessible one. Nevertheless, the elaborate base serves to separate the represented individual from the emblems of French power—a magnificent crown, a plaque adorned with the symbols of the French monarchy, and a canon, rifle and arrows representing France's military prowess. The attributes at the foot of the base also identify Louis XV as a patron of the arts, supportive of writers and musicians, and responsible for France's cultural prosperity. In this case, then, it is above all the lavish base that endows the bust with a supreme quality, while the portrait itself radiates a simpler, humane air despite its military character and the absence of a smile.

Parisian inventories show that private individuals owned portraits of the king and were also exposed to them on the streets of the capital, where they appeared on various shop signs. Busts of royal family members were reproduced in full size or on a smaller scale and, beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, were also made in biscuit porcelain at the royal factory in Sèvres. Reproductions of the king's portrait bust were placed by the court in various public spaces in order to promote the image of the monarchy. Portraits of the king and queen were also sold or granted by the court to members of the nobility, and were either placed in their homes as a form of interior decoration or donated for display in public places. When used within a domestic interior, such busts would have displayed their owners' patriotic support for the monarch. Other, less costly replicas were created by minor sculptors—sometimes without permission—and sold by art dealers. Small plaster or terracotta copies of the king's sculpted portraits were not only much cheaper than painted portraits, but also more prestigious, due to the genre's traditional association with the rich nobility. Celebrated sculpted and painted portraits were also copied by engravers and disseminated in the form of prints. Attesting to the interest in such prints among collectors, Roger de Piles asserted in 1699 in his *L'Abregé de la vie des peintres*: "Firstly, portraits of sovereigns."[31]

As critical political voices grew increasingly louder from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, political criticism directed at the monarchy became more pronounced. In the first volume of the *Encyclopédie*, published in 1751, Diderot was responsible for the entry on *Autorité politique*. He opened it with a basic notion concerning the ruler:

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31   Roger de Piles, *L'Abregé de la vie des peintres* (Paris, 1699), 86.

> No man has by nature been granted the right to command others. Freedom is a gift from heaven, and every individual of the same species has the right to enjoy it as soon as he is in enjoyment of his reason. [...] Since he has no power or authority over them [the people] except by their choice and consent, he may never employ his authority to breach the act or contract by which it was conferred upon him.[32]

Diderot's concern with freedom as a basic human right is echoed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's political views. His most influential political treatise, *Du contrat social*, which was published in 1762, described the ideal form of a political society. Rousseau distinguished the general will from the private one, and claimed that a monarch is a problematic sovereign because:

> [...] if there is no form of government more vigorous than monarchy, there is also none in which a particular will is more dominant and controls other wills more easily.[33]

A decade later, Voltaire, who was influenced by English politics, reinforced this concern, emphasizing the need to restore to all men their natural rights:

> It can be assumed that a constitution that has regulated the rights of the king, of the nobility and of the people, and in which everyone finds security, will last as long as human affairs can last.[34]

These views, which fed the anti-royalist discourse of the time, exercised a significant effect on the public. And while these philosophical writings also undoubtedly contributed to the strengthening of the public's self-consciousness, the court did not remain indifferent to such ideas, and chose to promote a softened royal image. Consequently, the portrait—whether painted or sculpted—became an important propaganda tool. François-Hubert Drouais' 1773 portrait of Louis XV (Versailles, Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon), painted just one year before the king's death, offers a more intimate representation of the

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32   Denis Diderot, "Autorité politique," in: *Encyclopédie*, eds. Diderot and d'Alembert, vol. 1, 898.

33   Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762), in *The Essential Rousseau*, trans. Lowell Bair (New York, 1983), 61.

34   Voltaire, *Questions on the Encyclopedia*, "Government" (1771–4), in *Political Writings*, ed. and trans. David Williams (Cambridge and New York, 1994), 60.

monarch. Despite the royal attributes on the king's chest, his head is slightly lowered, his eyes gaze softly at the viewer, his face is naturally portrayed, and his lips seem to convey a gentle and warm smile. The simplicity and directness of this image anticipates those characteristic of Louis XVI's portraits and the unique advantage of the sculpted bust in simulating a private, physical encounter between the viewer and the sitter, which was harnessed for a promotional purpose.

Louis XVI was born at Versailles in 1754. Following the death of his grandfather Louis XV, he ruled as King of France and Navarre from 1774 until 1791. From 1791 to 1792 he led a constitutional monarchy as King of the French. His execution a year later, in 1793, brought to an end more than one thousand years of continuous monarchial rule in France. The twenty-year-old king inherited a government in deep debt, and a society in which entrenched privilege made it difficult, if not impossible, to effect the social, economic, and political reforms that were necessary both to solve the monarchy's financial problems and to keep up with a rapidly changing society and economy. The designers of the monarchial image thus had to carefully navigate between the need to present a strong and stable image of the king and the need to appeal to the increasingly antagonistic French public.

Jean-Antoine Houdon's 1790 portrait bust of the king (fig. 58), which was created during the last and most unstable stage of Louis XVI's rule, initially reveals no attempt to convey simplicity, sensibility or self-exposure—qualities that would be expected from an image seeking to appear accessible to the viewers;[35] the sitter does not smile or seem approachable; his image, moreover, does not appear to participate in the changing social discourse of gender. Rather, it conforms to the style of traditional paternal representations of authority. This bust is probably the one shown at the Hôtel de Ville in Paris and miraculously spared during the riots of August 10, 1792. It was one of the last busts of the king commissioned by French municipalities after the foundation of a constitutional monarchy on July 14, 1790. This portrait is in fact a replica Houdon made of an earlier bust by him, which was exhibited at the Salon of 1787 and which had been commissioned by the French stock exchange in 1781 and executed only in 1787, after Houdon was finally granted his requested sittings with the king.

Despite Louis XVI's political unpopularity, his bad personal reputation, and his unattractive appearance, Houdon sculpted a noble image of him. The thirty-three-year-old monarch is presented in a long truncation, parallel to a half-length painted portrait. The king is portrayed gazing into the distance; his

35   On this bust, see Poulet et al., *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, no. 50, 279–282.

FIGURE 58   *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, Louis XVI, King of France, *1790, marble, h. 96 cm, Versailles, Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon.*
IMAGE: RONIT MILANO

head is slightly raised and turned toward his right, and is topped by a fashionable wig tied in a ribbon at the nape of his neck. His courtly attire includes the cross of the Ordre de la Toison d'Or and a mantle embroidered with the badge of the Ordre du Saint-Esprit, which envelopes the bust and falls in rich folds at its base. Houdon's arrangement of the drapery is reminiscent of Baroque sculpture, and the sitter's elbows are stretched to add volume to the bust in a manner that recalls Bernini's designs. Considering this bust's public resonance, and the official presentation of the original piece at the Salon, it can be assumed that Houdon probably used the conventions of Baroque portrait busts to echo the powerful sculpted representations of Louis XIV—the ultimate symbol of the French absolute monarchy. By evoking Bernini's image, Houdon's portrayal of Louis XVI affiliated him with the Sun King's monarchic ideology, while likening Houdon himself to the legendary Bernini.

This strategic analogy between Louis XIV and Louis XVI, however, did not fool the Salon critics:

Here is the king: his popularity and modesty are rendered through the affectation of mixing him with the other [busts], and even of placing him

at the far end, where he is apt to be jostled and knocked over by all the passerby.[36]

Moreover, the details of Houdon's bust undermine the portrayal of the king's grandeur and political strength: The elaborate wig worn by Louis XIV in Bernini's bust is replaced in Louis XVI's portrait by an ordinary bagwig, which ties the king's appearance to the simpler style of the French bourgeoisie. His pompous mantle covers a contemporary attire similarly characteristic of middle and high-class French men, while the king wears no armor to create a victorious image or any other attribute that would relate his portrait to ancient imagery. Houdon, it appears, created a hybrid, unconventional image, which builds on simpler images of Louis XVI while implicitly echoing the mythological status of his predecessor.

The unique character of Houdon's bust is further revealed when compared with a more conventional representation of Louis XVI created by Louis-Pierre Deseine in 1790 (fig. 59), the same year that Houdon's portrait was inaugurated at the Hôtel de Ville in Paris.[37] This plaster portrait of the king, who agreed to sit for Deseine, was a model for a marble version, later offered by Deseine to the city of Paris and placed, just like Houdon's bust, in the City Hall. Despite the similar attributes that appear in both these portraits—the contemporary clothes and wig and the enveloping mantle—Deseine's composition is less dynamic and voluminous. The sitter's head is straight rather elevated, while his direct gaze and smiling expression are notably absent from Houdon's proud and remote portrayal of the king.

Like Houdon, Deseine created a hybrid portrait, albeit one conveying a different political message: Whereas Houdon's bust combined the old royal mythology and dynastic associations with a contemporary, simpler portrayal of the king, Deseine—sculpting Louis as a constitutional sovereign—refrained from emphasizing the king's relation to the French absolute monarchy. Instead, Deseine attempted to draw a balance between a majestic, respectful representation and a humane image of the king. Louis XV's simple and relatively soft appearance is combined with an elaborate yet contemporary costume and mantle, which were not uncommon in representations of more ordinary people. The king is seen wearing the badge of the Ordre du Saint-Esprit and the

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36   *Mémoires secrets*, letter 3, on the Salon of 26 August 1787. Cited in Poulet et al., *Jean-Antoine Houdon*, 279–281.

37   On Deseine's bust, see Anne-Marie de Lapparent, *Louis-Pierre Deseine* (Paris, 2012), no. 155, 306–308.

FIGURE 59   *Louis-Pierre Deseine*, Bust of Louis XVI, *1790, plaster, h. 70 cm (with base: 82 cm), Paris, Musée Carnavalet.*
IMAGE: RONIT MILANO

royal *cordon bleu*, which were similarly represented in portraits of other noble sitters. This hybrid combination, which calls to mind representations of men who were not members of the royal family, placed the king within French society and not outside of it or above it, like the divine entity portrayed by Houdon. Deseine's portrait of the king thus corresponded to the gradual shift in the perception of royalty and of the nobility, whose members came to be seen as ordinary men chosen to manage the state for the benefit of the people. This view was promoted not only through the political writings of French philosophers, but also through popular culture. In the famous comedy *La folle journée, ou le Mariage de Figaro*, written in 1778 by Pierre Beaumarchais, which was obviously banned at Versailles while becoming a success in the Parisian theaters, this notion is expressed in Figaro's monologue to his master:

> Because you are a great lord, you believe that you are a great genius! Nobility, fortune, rank, places, all that makes you so proud! But what have you done for so many advantages? You took the pain of being born, that's all—as for the rest, you are a rather ordinary man.[38]

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38   Pierre Beaumarchais, *La folle journée, ou le Mariage de Figaro* (Paris, 1785), act V, scene III. The play was first presented on stage on April 27, 1784.

The representation of the king as an ordinary person rather than as a divine entity required him to be perceived as a role model and a virtuous human being. In the decades preceding the Revolution, the royalist pamphlets sponsored and distributed by the court thus emphasized the king's personal virtue and good deeds.[39] Louis XVI was described as *'le meilleur citoyen'* and the most *'honnête homme.'* Charles Alexandre de Calonne, the *contrôleur général des finances* between 1783 and 1787, was the man responsible for the shaping of Louis XVI's image during those years. In a speech delivered in 1787 and reprinted in newspapers throughout France, he distinguished Louis XVI from his predecessors, pointing out the king's great interest in the well-being and happiness of his people. The royal image desired by Calonne was that of a 'bourgeois,' even 'democratic' king.

Since the smile incorporated by Deseine into Louis XVI's portrait seems to be central to his portrayal as an accessible, good-hearted individual concerned with his people's happiness and well-being, one may wonder about its subtle character. As I suggested earlier, however, laughter or a broad smile which exposes the teeth were excluded by the rules of propriety. Relating the emergence of smiles in art to advancements in dentistry, Colin Jones associated the broad smile with repulsive smells and the generally bad shape of French teeth.[40] Louis XVI, in particular, had a good reason to keep his lips together, since "his teeth were badly arranged and made his smile rather ungraceful".[41] An understated smile was therefore the choice most compatible with the contemporary French sense of decorum and with the bust's desired aesthetic effect.

Throughout this book, I have suggested that the motif of the smile was related to the rising ideology of the pursuit of happiness, and that it was applied in various contexts to construct both individual and social forms of happiness. In the course of the eighteenth century, however, the pursuit of happiness came to be seen not merely as a personal objective, but also as a political interest. In his role as a father figure, the monarch was expected to consider and promote the well-being and happiness of his people—as made manifest in the quote

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39   Vivian Gruder recalls some of those pamphlets in "The Bourbon Monarchy: Reforms and Propaganda at the End of the Ancien Regime," in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, ed. Keith Michael Baker, vol. 1, 358–372; see also Evelyne Lever, "Le Testament de Louis XVI et la propaganda royaliste par l'image pendant la Révolution et l'Empire," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 94 (1979): 159–173.

40   Jones, "Incorruptible Teeth, or, The French Smile Revolution," 98.

41   Charles-Alexandre-François Félix, comte d'Hézecques, *Souvenirs d'un page à la cour de Louis XVI* (Paris, 1873), quoted by Colin Jones, "Pulling Teeth in Eighteenth-Century Paris," 143.

from the *Encyclopédie* that opens this chapter. By the mid-eighteenth century, 'happiness' was mentioned in almost every political text. The entry *Roi* in the *Encyclopédie* opens with the words:

> The best gift that the gods can give to men is a king who loves his people and who is loved, who trusts in his neighbors and who has their confidence, who finally by his justice and humanity makes foreign nations envious of the happiness of the subjects who live under his power.[42]

Appreciation of the king thus came to be directly related to the degree of effectiveness with which this message was transmitted to the public, which had come into its own as a self-conscious social and political body. This logic reiterates the importance of visually representing a sympathetic and caring ruler, and further explains the prominence of a softer, smiling image of the king during the reign of Louis xvi.

As discussed in the introduction to this book, moreover, the representation of a smiling, compassionate figure was expected to trigger the viewer's sentiment and sympathy.[43] While compassion and grace were not the only qualities expected from the king, in Louis xvi's case, they coincided with the artistic interest in the portrayal of sentiment, which emerged in the mid-eighteenth century. In this representational context, moreover, the quality of grace occupied a unique place. Referring to it in *L'art de peindre*, which was published in 1760, Claude-Henri Watelet stated that grace was the product of "naivety, ingenious curiosity, the desire to please, spontaneous joy, regret, even the sighs and tears caused by the loss of a cherished object."[44] Court propaganda undoubtedly sought to communicate this "desire to please" in portraits of the king, together with a sense of trustworthiness. Recent psychological studies confirm the intuitive correlation between these two qualities, revealing smiles to encourage trust and cooperation.[45] The related qualities of honesty and sincerity were similarly promoted in the second half of the eighteenth century by various writers. In 1772, Diderot praised these qualities in his *Madame de la*

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42   "Roi," in *Encyclopédie*, eds. Diderot and d'Alembert, vol. 14, 321.

43   Adam Smith, in his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, considered compassion as a central sentiment related to sympathy, and defined it as a feeling conveying propriety. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, part I, chapter I.

44   Claude-Henri Watelet, *L'art de peindre. Poëme. Avec des réflexions sur les différentes parties de la peinture* (Paris, 1760), n.p.

45   For instance, see Jörn W. Scharlemann et al., "The Value of a Smile: Game Theory with a Human Face," *Journal of Economic Psychology* 22 (2001): 617–640.

Carlière, while stressing their role in provoking empathy.[46] In the first chapter of this book, I discussed the theme of sincerity as integral to the burgeoning Enlightenment discourse on introspection and self-exposure. This theme, I argue, was similarly addressed in Louis XVI's portraits such as the one created by Deseine. The somewhat more moderate representation of self-exposure, which is evident in this bust by means of the king's body language and smile, was undoubtedly due to royal propaganda efforts to provoke the public's trust in, and sympathy for, the French king.

The public value attached to the representation of the king's personal qualities is thus compatible with Louis XVI's description as 'le plus honnête homme' in court-sponsored royalist pamphlets. The interpretation of the term *honnêteté* as 'propriety' was well known in French society.[47] Yet its literal significance as 'honesty' must have also had an impact, especially when used in relation to the king. The description of the sovereign as '*le plus honnête homme*' carried this double meaning, and was designed to shape his perception as the most polite, proper, and honest man in France—a credible and reliable figure. The motif of the smile in royal portraits can thus be further understood as representing these qualities of decorum and credibility.

The smile motif appeared in portraits of the French king even prior to the Revolution. In 1788, a pair of porcelain busts of the king and queen (fig. 60) was commissioned by the court to be presented to one of the ambassadors sent to France by Tipu Sultan, ruler of Mysore. Conceived of as a show of political power, this portrait of Louis XVI, which was designed after a sculpture by Louis-Simon Boizot, portrays the king with a proud, elevated head, an extravagant attire, conventional royal attributes, and an elaborate mantle. The traditional armor, however, was dismissed in favor of a more 'sociable' image, while the king's face is graced by a gentle smile expressive of his humane and sensitive character. His head is turned to the left, where the bust of his wife would have conventionally been placed, and his smile echoes her expression. Marie-Antoinette's face, in turn, is turned towards her husband. She is magnificently dressed and her mantle falls from her right shoulder as if she were exposing herself to Louis while allowing the viewer to conceptually occupy the position of the king and identify with him. Her graceful portrayal and gentle smile allude to the royal couple's peaceful conjugal life and to their acquaintance with contemporary ideas concerning the structure of the family. In this context, it is worth mentioning that Marie-Antoinette's bust is about one tenth

46   Diderot, *Madame de la Carlière*, in *Oeuvres de Denis Diderot*, vol. 5, 658.

47   Maurice Magendie, *La Politesse mondaine et les théories de l'honnêteté en France, au XVIIe siècle, de 1600 à 1660*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1925).

FIGURE 60   *After Louis-Simon Boizot*, Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette, *c. 1788,*
soft-paste biscuit porcelain manufactured in Sèvres porcelaine, h. 37.5 cm
Louis XVI; h. 40.7 cm Marie-Antoinette, London, Victoria and Albert Museum.
IMAGE: © VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

higher than her spouse's—a fact that further supports the portrayal of the king
and queen's new domestic roles, the acknowledgement of the wife's central-
ity within the domestic narrative, and the propagation of the king's image as
a private and familial person parallel to the affirmation of his public, official
character. As Simon Schama notes in *The Domestication of Majesty*, the rising
popularity of royal family portraits during the eighteenth century was undoubt-
edly related to this redesigned monarchic image.[48]

A comparison of this pair of busts to an earlier porcelain pair depicting
Louis XV and his wife Marie Leczinska, which was created after a design by
Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne (one of the reproductions is in Los Angeles, The J. Paul
Getty Museum), demonstrates this representational shift, highlighting Louis XV
and Marie-Antoinette's conciliatory character and the absence of any sym-
bols of war or victory or any mythological allusions. The less pompous, more
approachable and humane character of the royal couple on the eve of the

48   Schama, "The Domestication of Majesty."

Revolution is echoed by Charles Paul Landon's painted portrait of comte Pierre-Jean de Bourcet and his family, which was created in 1791 (fig. 61).[49] The count, who was one of the directors of the Dauphin's entourage, clearly displays his royalist loyalties: busts of the imprisoned Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette are prominently displayed beside the family members, along with a vase containing a white lily—the symbol of the monarchy—which presumably represents the Dauphin. Another lily, which lies dying upon the table, represents the king and queen's oldest son, the first Dauphin, who died just before the fall of the Bastille in July of 1789, and whose portrait hangs prominently on the wall above the count's family. A framed portrait of the count's own brother lies at the foot of the table, while an ominously empty frame hanging on the wall seems to

FIGURE 61   *Charles Paul Landon*, Le Comte Pierre-Jean de Bourcet et sa famille, *1791, oil on canvas, 97 × 130 cm, Grenoble, Musée de Grenoble.*
IMAGE: © MUSÉE DE GRENOBLE

49   On this painting, see Gilles Chomer and Jacques Thuillier, eds, *Peintures françaises avant 1815: La collection du Musée de Grenoble* (Paris, 2000), no. 67, 160.

allude to another impending death. Significantly, the height of none of the Bourcet family members, whether sitting or standing, exceeds that of the busts of the king and queen in terms of their placement within the composition.

Like the porcelain images of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette discussed above, the busts of the king and queen depicted in the Bourcet family portrait are a replica of an original pair by Louis-Simon Boizot, whose official portraits of the king and queen were intentionally designed for reproduction and distribution. Curiously, in the Bourcet portrait, the conventional positioning of the pendant busts is reversed, and the queen is placed to the king's right, in the foreground of the composition. This choice further underscores the larger size of the queen's bust in relation to her spouse's, rather than allowing the perspectival effect to eliminate this difference in height. The placement of Marie-Antoinette within the composition resonates with that of Madame Bourcet, who appears across from her on the right-hand side. These two female figures literally frame the composition, creating a circle that contains their children and husbands. Set in this context, Louis XVI's portrait bust becomes a statement concerning familial relationships and the king's nature as a devoted father and husband.

The positioning of Louis XVI's portrait in the background, where it is partly hidden by his wife's image, might seem to challenge the paternal role of the king. Yet despite his marginalization in the Bourcet portrait, Boizot's design of the king's bust does not dismiss this important traditional role. The paternal image of the monarch was nurtured throughout the entire reign of the Bourbon dynasty: yet whereas it was traditionally communicated through the compositional design of his garment and pose, which conveyed supremacy and inspired confidence, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, as the busts discussed in this chapter reveal, the same ideal was conveyed through a sensitive, more approachable portrayal of the face and an allusion to a warmer 'fatherly' type of paternalism. The evolution in the portrayal of the French king, from Bernini's depiction of Louis XIV as a divine entity to the mixture of simplicity and extravagance represented by Lemoyne and later by Houdon, Deseine, and Boizot, illuminates the historical shift summarized by Peter Burke:

> Remoteness has given way to accessibility, or at least to the illusion of accessibility. The dominant language of politics—even in despotisms— is the language of liberty, equality, and fraternity.[50]

50   Burke, "The Demise of Royal Mythologies," 254.

Serving as both a reflection of the evolving dialogue between the French court and the public and as a reflexive device for the construction and propagation of the king's identity, the transformation of the royal portrait bust participated not only in the political discourse of the time, but also in the evolving individuation of political identity within Western modernity.

Conclusion

An art cannot support itself except by the original principle which gave it birth, medicine by empiricism, painting by portraiture, sculpture with the bust…

—DENIS DIDEROT[1]

In 1834, the celebrated French sculptor Pierre-Jean David, better known as David d'Angers, traveled to Germany, where he modeled a portrait bust of the German writer Ludwig Tieck.[2] This event was commemorated by the German painter Carl Christian Vogel von Vogelstein in a complex group portrait (fig. 62), which touches upon a range of aesthetic and social discourses concerning the relations between painting and sculpture, between the present moment and the realm of the eternal, and between parents and children. A thorough analysis of the historical and cultural shifts addressed in this painting is a subject worthy of a separate study. In the context of this book, however, its comparison to Louis-Léopold Boilly's painting of Houdon sculpting the bust of Pierre-Simon Laplace (fig. 63), which was created thirty years earlier, highlights the unique intellectual, epistemic, and aesthetic status of the eighteenth-century bust, while pointing to the further development of this genre within modernity and positioning the central ideas and themes delineated in this book within a broader historical context.

David d'Angers (who had been the teacher of the German sculptor Christian Friedrich Tieck, Ludwig's young brother), is shown in the course of creating a colossal and austere portrait. Significantly, von Vogelstein chose to represent d'Angers carving this impersonal and idealistic bust of the writer, rather than the intimate and naturalistic bronze statuette of the same sitter that David cast in an edition of three or four, and which reflects both the personal connection between David and the writer and Tieck's status as one of the fathers of the Romantic movement.[3] The elevated bust depicted in the painting dominates the composition; more importantly, it is presented as an object, whose size and appearance distinguish it from the natural-looking faces of the surrounding human figures, while the light streaming through a window to illuminate

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1   Denis Diderot, *Essais sur la peinture*, x, 507, quoted in *On Art and Artists*, ed. Seznec, 106.

2   The bust is today in the Galerie David d'Angers, Angers.

3   One copy of the statuette is today in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; another is in the Frick Collection, New York.

FIGURE 62   *Carl Christian Vogel von Vogelstein*, Ludwig Tieck, von David d'Angers porträtiert
(David d'Angers Modeling the Bust of Ludwig Tieck)*, 1834, oil on canvas, 88 × 94 cm,
Leipzig, Museum der bildenden Künste.*
WORK IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

the sitter makes the enormous, heroic bust itself appear as a source of pure
white light.

Boilly's painting of Houdon's studio, which was created ca. 1803, is centered
on a strikingly similar subject. Boilly portrays Houdon sculpting a portrait of
the celebrated mathematician and astronomer Pierre-Simon Laplace, later
the marquis de Laplace.[4] Yet whereas Tieck's bust occupies the center of the
composition, Laplace's life-size bust, which echoes the life-size heads of the

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4 A plaster bust of Laplace by Houdon was bequeathed to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs
together with Boilly's painting. See Poulet et al., *Jean Antoine Houdon*, 341–344.

FIGURE 63 *Louis-Léopold Boilly*, L'atelier de Houdon, *c. 1803, oil on canvas, 88 × 115 cm, Paris, Musée des Arts décoratifs.*
WORK IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

surrounding figures, is positioned at a height similar to that of Houdon and Laplace's faces; it is depicted off-center, on the right-hand side of the composition, and its grayish color recalls the color of the clay usually used by Houdon for his preliminary models. In contrast to the brightly illuminated, imposing bust sculpted by David, which is stripped of its natural human traits and appears remote both from the surrounding figures and from the viewer, Houdon's natural-looking bust emblematizes the values of simplicity and accessibility; facing the viewer, it enables him or her to communicate with Laplace through his sculptural image. David, by comparison, created a moral exemplar for posterity rather than for the contemporary viewer,[5] while the only person who 'communicates' with the bust is the artist himself. In Boilly's

5 On David's views and work, see de Caso, *David d'Angers*; Patrick Le Nouëne et al., *David d'Angers: portraitiste*, exh. cat. (Angers, 2010); Emerson Bowyer and Jacques de Caso, *David d'Angers: Making the Modern Monument*, exh. cat. (New York, 2013).

work, Laplace's portrait resonates with both the faces of the human figures surrounding it and with the other portrait busts displayed in Houdon's studio. This overwhelming number of human and sculptural heads consists of busts that were all recognizable to the contemporary viewer by name, thus inviting him or her to connect with them as a member of the same social sphere. In this painting, the sitter's status as a moral exemplar, and the function of sculpture as a document for posterity, are represented not by the bust of Laplace, but rather by Houdon's sculpture of Voltaire, which is placed behind the sculptor at the center of the composition, echoing Laplace's posture. This depiction of *Voltaire Seated*—one of Houdon's most celebrated works—emphasizes the distinct operation of the portrait bust in relation to other sculptural genres. As I have suggested throughout this book, in an age that celebrated individualism parallel to the formation of a collective social identity and discourse, the portrait bust functioned as a means of social communication—underscoring the sitter's uniqueness while shaping his identity, and by extension that of the viewer, as one member of a collective of individuals who together form French society. This perception of sculpture was encapsulated by Diderot's following comparison between sculpture and painting: "I look at a painting; I must converse with a statue."[6] Yet as von Vogelstein's painting reveals, the communicative essence of the eighteenth-century portrait bust was, to a great extent, lost during the first half of the nineteenth century, giving way to relatively austere and idealized representations. And while a naturalistic tendency was revived around the middle of the nineteenth century in the works of Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, Charles Cordier, and Auguste Rodin, among others, it evolved under a completely different set of circumstances, and served to propagate an entirely different set of ideals.

In addition to the discourse on sculpture, both Boilly and von Vogelstein's paintings address the changing discourse on the family, and on the relations between the concepts of the 'family' and of 'society,' which was central to intellectual thought throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Ludwig Tieck is seated, while his oldest daughter, Dorothea Tieck, stands behind him, gracefully leaning her right arm on the back of his armchair. Ludwig's right hand holds the hand of a little boy in a green outfit, who stands at the center

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6   Diderot, *Observations sur la Sculpture et sur Bouchardon* (1763), in *Œuvres complètes de Diderot*, ed. Jules Assézat (Paris, 1875–1877), vol. XIII, 41; For broader (and sometimes opposing) views on the paralleling of scultural figures to real ones during this period, see Caroline van Eck, "Enargeia ou fétichisme: le rejet de l'image vivante dans les discours sur la sculpture des année1750," in *Penser l'art dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIᵉ siècle*, eds. Michel and Magnusson, 627–642.

of the composition as he directs an admiring gaze at the esteemed sitter. This image, however, should not be mistaken for a family portrait, since it is merely a carefully chosen fragment of the sitter's family: Dorothea, like her father, was a writer and translator, and the book in her left hand bespeaks her family's contribution to the intellectual sphere and to posterity. The two men admiring David's work are Wolf Heinrich, count von Baudissin, who collaborated with Ludwig and Dorothea Tieck on translations of William Shakespeare, and Otto Magnus von Stackelberg, a writer, archaeologist, painter and art historian. Seen alongside the sculptor and Ludwig Tieck, these figures present the viewer with a stern statement regarding the main mission of the family and, by extension, of society as a whole: to create role models for posterity, which is represented in the painting by the little boy holding Tieck's hand. This boy, whose body forms a diagonal line leading upwards to Tieck's sculpted image, has been recognized as Johannes, the painter's son. This choice, while echoing the eighteenth-century artistic practice of representing one's own child as a form of self-exploration, communicates a different message: the boy not only emblematizes the idea of posterity, but also emphasizes the importance of his father's contribution to the epistemic sphere. Von Vogelstein does not paint a portrait of a specific family—neither Tieck's nor his own; instead, the outstanding individuals in his painting constitute a series of emblems that come together to represent an ideal and virtuous collective social image.

Boilly's painting, by contrast, represents the artist's entire family—Houdon himself, his wife, and their three daughters. Dressed in light white dresses, these female figures form the most prominent group in the composition. Madame Houdon is seated in a chair identical to, and facing, the one occupied by Laplace. Together with the image of Voltaire, who is seated on a similar chair, these three figures form a pyramidal structure that frames the figure of Houdon, while pointing to the interrelations between selfhood, maternity and greatness as the constitutive elements of eighteenth-century French virtue. Madame Houdon's three daughters stand behind her: sixteen-year-old Sabine, who gazes out at the viewer, fifteen-year-old Anne-Ange, and thirteen-year-old Claudine. This representational choice clearly creates a dichotomy between the social functions of men and women; yet in comparison to the marginal role played by the single female figure in von Vogelstein's painting, the scene painted by Boilly underscores the centrality of women and the new maternal values they represent.[7] The two male figures and the marble bust, which represent the masculine, intellectual aspects of society, appear simple and

7   For a historical comparison of the status of women, see these two studies: Annie K. Smart, *Citoyennes: Women and the Ideal of Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France*

natural, and are actually situated in the shadowed part of the composition. The female figures, which are equal to them in height, bask in the light streaming into the room from an invisible window, and clearly surpass them in terms of their charm and enlightening power. Sabine, who is now a young woman, stands below the portrait bust of her as a child, which is situated slightly to her left. Boilly has portrayed her as the main figure in the composition, with her position mirroring that of Laplace's portrait bust. Gazing out directly at the viewer, she invites him or her to become part of this family portrait, as well as of a larger conceptual portrait representing French society. By charging her with this communicative role, while underscoring her connection to her own sculpted portrait, Boilly symbolically acknowledges the bust's operation as a site of communication between sitter, artist, and viewer that was instrumental to the formation of French identities.

The analogy between Sabine and Laplace's bust further underscores the role of the eighteenth-century portrait bust in mediating these ideals: these figures, which are both Houdon's creations, function as reflections of both himself and of the viewer. Both the artist's daughter and the bust converse with the beholder, including him or her in the cultural and social narrative represented by the painting. It is this reflective and reflexive essence, as I have argued throughout this book, that cast the eighteenth-century French portrait bust as an active social and cultural agent. Borrowing a term used today in the field of contemporary art, the eighteenth-century French portrait bust can indeed be described as a form of 'participatory art.' In a manner unique to its time and place, it engaged the viewer in an act of self-exploration and self-identification, while generating social situations and identities. As the comparison between Boilly and von Vogelstein's paintings reveals, the unique set of intellectual and epistemic conditions and the new artistic conventions that shaped the eighteenth-century bust had given way, by the early nineteenth century, to a different array of social and cultural discourses, which irrevocably changed this genre. Yet for a few short decades, the busts analyzed in this book engaged the viewer in exploring and constructing a new set of individual and collective identities that constitute the very core of our modernity.

(Newark, 2011); Jennifer Ngaire Heuer, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789–1830* (Ithaca, 2005).

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